

Strychnine Poisoning in Dogs and Cats

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Toxin
Strychnine

Source

Pesticides used to control gophers, moles, rats, coyotes, and other potential pests.

General Information

Strychnine affects the nervous system by causing uncontrolled firing of the nerves that cause muscle movement. This causes muscle injury, muscle cell breakdown, and hyperthermia. The respiratory muscles are contracted resulting in difficulty breathing, lack of oxygen to the body, and death if not treated. Clinical signs may be present within 10 minutes to 2 hours of ingestion.

Toxic Dose

Dogs: 0.3 mg per pound of body weight.

Cats: 0.9 mg per pound of body weight.

Signs

Nervousness, tenseness, and stiffness. Violent [seizures](#) may be caused by touch, sound, or light, or may occur spontaneously. Progression to extensor rigidity produces a "saw horse" posture.

Immediate Action

Induce vomiting if alert and not seizing. Seek veterinary attention.

Veterinary Care

General treatment: The induction of vomiting may be continued, gastric lavage is performed, and [activated charcoal](#) is administered.

Supportive treatment: The animal is anesthetized with [pentobarbital](#) or inhalant (gas) anesthesia to control the seizures. IV fluids are administered to maintain hydration. The animal is monitored and treated for hyperthermia. The pet should be kept in a quiet, darkened room to decrease sensory input. Treatment may need to be continued for 48 hours or longer until the strychnine is out of the body's system.

Specific treatment: Unavailable.

Prognosis

Guarded to good.