



Press Release: For Immediate Release

Cat Professional: Comment and Advice for Cat Owners Following the Recent Spate of Cat Poisoning Incidents in Somerset

27th August 2009

This week's press coverage of multiple cases of antifreeze poisoning of cats in the Somerset area is sadly not a stand-alone incident. At least 40 cats per year are known to die of this poison and flurries of cases are often seen in small areas. In many cases the poisoning is not malicious, but there have been concerns with the recent spate of cases in Somerset since antifreeze is not usually needed in the summer months.

Antifreeze contains the poison ethylene glycol. It's a particularly nasty poison since even tiny amounts can be fatal to cats through causing kidney failure. Sadly even when veterinary treatment is sought, many affected cats will die so prevention is extremely important. Antifreeze is sweet and is therefore attractive for cats to drink. Cats can be vulnerable to being poisoned if:

- they are shut in a garage or shed where antifreeze is the only liquid available for them to drink
- antifreeze leaks from a car and the cat walks through a puddle of this (when they groom their feet later they will ingest the poison)
- they like drinking from water-features which have been treated with antifreeze to stop them freezing up in the winter
- sadly some cases of malicious poisoning do occur

There are **three** phases of illness seen in affected cats – if at all suspicious that your cat could be suffering from ethylene glycol poisoning you should contact your vet **immediately**. Early and aggressive treatment can be successful in some cats, depending on how much poison they have ingested (the Feline Advisory Bureau – FAB – has an inspiring success story which can be found at <http://www.fabcats.org/owners/poisons/anti-freeze.html>).

The three phases that owners should look out for:

First phase – within half an hour of ingestion of the poison, lasting for up to 12 hours: during this phase the cat may appear drunk or intoxicated since ethylene glycol is an alcohol. This can make the cat walk unsteadily and appear uncoordinated. They may also be very thirsty, vomit and urinate excessively.

Second phase – around 12-24 hours after ingestion: breathlessness, lethargy and loss of appetite may be seen.

Third phase – from around 24-48 hours after ingestion: kidney failure sets in and signs including vomiting, loss of appetite, depression and coma can be seen. Sadly many affected cats die or need to be euthanased within a week of the poisoning

Preventing access to antifreeze is the best way to reduce the risk of poisoning. Antifreeze that contains propylene glycol is less toxic (and the taste is less appealing to cats) so this is also worth considering.

Further information on feline health matters can be found at www.catprofessional.com. Comment or questions about this release should be directed to Lynn Polkey at lynn@catprofessional.com or (0131) 208 0298.