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Published January 7th, 2009

## POISONOUS PLANTS

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Easter Lily istockphoto.com

Indoor holiday plants and winter/spring seasonal bulb planting can sometimes pose health threats to our dogs and cats.

In some instances, a diagnosis is easy, when the pet has been observed to chew on or ingest part of the plant, or there is obvious plant material in vomitus, or the plant pot has been disrupted. Factors that help determine what measures your veterinarian would take include the type of plant ingested, when it was eaten and what the current signs of illness are. Your vet might recommend inducing vomiting and giving a toxin-binding agent, such as activated charcoal, to decrease absorption. Other therapy is supportive care for the symptoms, usually involving fluids, stomach protectants and anti-nausea medication.

Most of the winter holiday plants cause simple gastrointestinal irritation, resulting in drooling, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. These plants include poinsettia, holly, mistletoe and most winter-planted bulbs (tulip, daffodil, iris and amaryllis). Just a note about poinsettia - while it definitely can cause illness, the toxic effects have generally been overstated.

Mushroom ingestion and toxicity is one of the most common plant poisons seen in dogs. Different species of wild mushrooms cause different symptoms; most common is the toxic effect on the liver by Amanita species. Signs include drooling, vomit and diarrhea, and occasionally neurologic weakness. This can be a very serious problem that can cause death. Treatment is aggressive supportive care with hospitalization, intravenous fluids, anti-nausea and anti-oxidant medication, and liver and kidney bloodwork monitoring. The sooner treatment is started, the better the chances for full recovery. Mushroom ingestion is considered an emergency.

A plant toxicity found in cats only (interesting that it doesn't affect dogs) is lily-induced kidney failure. The leaves and blooms of Easter, tiger, day and other Asiatic hybrid lilies are the causative plants. This is also very serious, as for mushroom toxicity, and can certainly cause death. Symptoms include vomiting (within 1-24 hours after ingestion, with progressive depression, inappetance and weakness. Kidney failure will start to occur within 12-36 hours. This is potentially treatable, with aggressive hospitalization, intravenous fluids and other support. The prognosis for recovery is poor if treatment is started more than 18 hours after ingestion. Note: if you are sending flowers to a friend who has a cat, it might be

wise to ask the florist to eliminate any lilies from the bouquet.

Two excellent on-line resources regarding poisonous plants (and other animal care information) are VeterinaryPartner.com and ASPCA.org. As with any issue relating to your pet's medical care, it is best to call your veterinarian when questions arise about what your dog or cat may have eaten.

Dr. Mona S. Miller lives in Lafayette with her 4 year old son, yellow Labrador Retriever and grey cat. She has worked at Four Seasons Animal Hospital in Lafayette since moving here in 2001. She attended Cal as an undergrad, and received her DVM from U.C. Davis. She can be reached at Four Seasons, 938-7700, or by email to [MonaSDVM@aol.com](mailto:MonaSDVM@aol.com).

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