

Bleach Poisoning in Pets

Bleach can affect pets in various ways, but fortunately usually not severe. Recently, however, we have had locally, two reported cases of severe bleach poisoning which led to death of the animals, one dog, one cat. We and the owners were so distressed that we decided that it was a priority to put a warning onto our website.

Regular household bleaches contain 3% to 6% sodium hypochlorite; commercial bleaches are typically much more concentrated and therefore more toxic.

Color-safe bleaches contain sodium peroxide, sodium perborates, or enzymatic detergents which have different but equally dangerous effects on pets.

Most animals do not have a severe reaction to bleach and if ingested or it gets on their paws or skin, they can exhibit mild effects such as skin irritation and irritation of the oesophagus and even the stomach. Inhalation exposure to bleach can cause respiratory irritation with coughing and bronchospasms.

What Are the Signs and Symptoms of Bleach Poisoning?

The ultra-concentrated bleach will cause chemical burns and lesions both internally and externally. Color-safe bleach generally causes vomiting, and if it has a high concentration, blood might appear.

For the majority of cases, which involve household bleach that has been diluted in water, symptoms begin within minutes. These include heavy drooling (especially in cats) and redness and irritation on the skin and in and around the mouth. You may also notice your pet pawing at its mouth or in other ways acting abnormally. Vomiting is less common in these cases, but for the Labrador-type pets who may actually drink an entire bucket of bleach water, it may come back up.

Skin irritation may result in the pet rubbing itself along a rough wall or on a hard floor.

If you notice any of the above signs or any different, odd behaviour, consider that it could be a reaction to bleach and consult your vet immediately.