

General Health - Natural Food Hazards

We tend to associate poisoning in domestic pets with artificial chemicals such as snail baits, rat poisons, insecticides and agricultural chemicals. Although these substances cause the vast majority of cases of poisonings seen in small animal practice, we shouldn't forget that there are a number of food hazards which are toxic to dogs and cats.

Onions - Raw onions, soup and even discarded pizzas containing cooked onions have all been reported to cause poisoning in dogs, and more rarely in cats. In dogs, ingestion of as little as 30g per days of raw onions for 3 days can produce haemolytic anaemia. Oxidising agents in onions are thought to be to blame, which cause damage to erythrocytes, resulting in the production of Heinz bodies and methaemoglobinaemia.

Mushrooms - Although not a usual part of the diet, mushrooms occasionally pop up in our gardens and dog walking areas, especially in autumn. Poisoning has been reported in both dogs and cats after eating or simply playing with toxic mushrooms. Highly toxic varieties can cause paralysis, coma and death.

Garbage/compost - Dogs in particular are renowned for their scavenging habits, greed, and apparent lack of discrimination when choosing what they will eat. However, their ability to vomit readily and efficient mechanisms to deal with ingested toxins protect them to a large degree from food poisoning. Despite this, garbage poisoning is a common problem, often caused by the ingestion of pre-formed staphylococcal enterotoxins.

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