

Ask A Vet: A Better Mouse Trap?

Sunday, December 1, 2013

Dear Dr. Weldy's,

My neighbor's dog ate mouse poison the other day and had to go to the vet. He told me they were lucky to catch it in time and had it been the newer poisons, the dog may not have done so well. I did not know there was a difference. Can you please tell me about the differences in products?

-Curious

Dear Curious,

This is an excellent question especially for this time of year. As the weather gets cooler, it is very common for the little furry mice to find warmer places to be so they migrate to your house which is much more comfortable to inhabit. In fact, I had two cases with two different owners presented to me just this past week in one day. Poison control hotlines report that rat and mouse poisonings for pets are the most common toxicities they get questions about.

The products on the market come in different colors and packaging such as pellets, baits blocks, or feed making them attractive to critters. A lot of them may even have names that sound similar. Here are some examples: *Assault mouse/rat Place Pack, Fastrac mouse seed place pacs, Hot shot Sudden Death, Vengeance, Anchor Rat and Mouse Bait, D-Con, Just One bite, D-cease, etc.* I bring this up because though the names are similar, they may and often do have entirely different active ingredients. Generally, the main active ingredients seen are of these four or combination thereof categories: long- acting anticoagulants which prevents blood from clotting so the animal bleeds out and there are first and second generations of these products; secondly, cholecalciferol which is vitamin D3 but when ingested in high amounts mobilizes the calcium from the bones into the blood causing hypercalcemia (increased calcium) and heart failure; thirdly, bromethalin which uncouples oxidative phosphorylation in brain resulting cerebral and spinal edema or swelling and with increase in spinal fluid pressure in brain you will see neurologic signs like tremors, seizures, paralysis, etc.; and lastly zinc phosphide rodenticides which liberates a toxic phosphine gas that interacts with stomach acid which is very lethal within hours of ingestion.

Knowing what the active ingredient is will greatly dictate the proper treatment for your pet that the veterinarian will administer. As an example, most are familiar with vitamin K1 being used to treat mouse poisoning. This is great for those products with a warfarin or anti-clotting active ingredient; however, vitamin K1 will NOT work on bromethalin poisonings.

It is up to your vet to decide the proper treatment so make sure to call as soon as possible if poisoning is suspected and seek help immediately. Generally, treatment consists of decontaminating the animal with activated charcoal, intravenous fluids, controlling hemorrhage if need be, oxygen, proper diets, general supportive care and monitoring for overt signs that do not immediately present itself.

My best advices are seeking treatment immediately and go back to the basics. A good old fashioned wooden mouse trap with peanut butter and cotton works really well!

-Dr. Wanda Schmeltz