

On the Homefront

Each week a different area business-person who lives or works in Lansing will share some information about his or her profession that may be useful to Lansing residents. Today's article was contributed by Dr. Rachel Gilligan, a veterinarian at Meadowridge Veterinary Clinic on Auburn Road in North Lansing.

Non-steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug Toxicity

So, your otherwise playful kitty isn't feeling well. She's just lying around and hasn't been eating much for a few days. You're justifiably concerned. It's the weekend, and you're not sure this is a dire emergency, but would like to make her feel better until Monday, when your veterinarian's clinic is open.

When we aren't feeling so well, we reach for something like aspirin or Tylenol, or Ibuprofen (NSAIDS or non steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs), so why not give kitty a bit to help her out?

Many well meaning pet owners do just that, and end up poisoning their pets!

Tylenol (acetaminophen) toxicity is due to an active metabolite made by the liver from the drug. This metabolite causes severe damage to liver cells and red blood cells. Dogs tend to have more liver damage, whereas cat's red blood cells undergo a transformation of their normal oxygen carrying hemoglobin to a non functional form called methemoglobin. One child-sized dosage Tylenol tablet contains almost twice the toxic level for a normal sized cat per kilogram of body weight. The adult size Tylenol has more than six times the toxic level!

The problem is more acute and life threatening in cats than in dogs (though by no means safe in your canine companion!). The signs in cat occur within one to two hours after ingestion and include salivation, vomiting, cyanotic gums, severe depression,

dark colored urine and swollen face and paws. If your pet ingests Tylenol, get it to a veterinarian right away for emergency treatment.

Aspirin (salicylic acid) is sometimes given to dogs and even cats, but the dosage should be carefully calculated by your vet. Aspirin can be very toxic in an overdose. In cats, for example, the dose is given every few days. A cat's liver cannot effectively metabolize aspirin the way humans can.

The same holds true for dogs, though they can withstand a slightly higher dose per pound of body weight due to a species difference in liver function.

Be careful of other home medications such as Pepto Bismol. It contains aspirin! So, read your labels! Again, if your pet ingests aspirin in an over dosage, call your vet for treatment. Untreated overdoses can result in stomach ulcers, severe kidney damage, and liver disease. The same holds true for Ibuprofen, which is never prescribed for pets. Be careful of accidental ingestion too, tablets like Advil are coated in a sweet tasting shell, and dogs may just eat them like candy if they are left around for an inquisitive pooch!

Like many other topics in pet health care, we can prevent a great deal of diseases in dogs and cats as we become more informed about them. If you have any questions about health care for your pets, please contact your veterinarian..