

EDIBLE MARIJUANA & VAPE PENS CAN BE DANGEROUS TO YOUR PETS

Animal ingestion of marijuana has occurred for some time, however, with the introduction of edible marijuana products and E-Cigarettes / Vape Pens, Colorado Veterinarians and the ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) have seen a marked increase in animals requiring treatment for related illness. A recent study by Wheat Ridge Veterinarian Dr. Stacy Meola, showed the number of dogs that fall ill to marijuana has quadrupled since marijuana became legalized.

Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald (Alameda East Veterinary Hospital) stated, "The problem is a person will have one edible brownie, but a dog gets up on the counter and will eat the whole tray of brownies. Their natural instinct is to gorge."

Dr. Jennifer Bolser of the Humane Society of Boulder Valley, when asked if pets can get high as a person would, said "No." Marijuana exposure in pets causes neurologic toxicity, which is not the same as the "high" that people experience. For pets that consume marijuana the most severely affected animals are the ones who have consumed marijuana edibles. These products can have very high levels of THC (tetrahydrocannabinol, the main mind-altering ingredient in the Cannabis plant).

THC and other cannabinoids affects the central nervous system, causing disruption of normal movement and behavior. Symptoms that develop in pets do not appear enjoyable for them. "I just want dogs and kids to be safe," stated Dr. Meola.

With an average 45-50 pound dog, it also takes much longer for the THC to exit the system, said Fitzgerald. For a person that would probably take 24-26 hours, but in a dog it can be up to three or four days. "There's no antidote for marijuana," said Fitzgerald. "The only way we treat is just be supportive, we watch for seizure, measure body temperature, and then put them on fluids to try to expel it quicker.

TREATMENT

The goal of treatment is to nurse the pet and prevent anxiety until the period of intoxication is complete. Noise and other sensory stimuli should be minimized. Some pets require sedatives or injections of fluids. If a large quantity of marijuana is in a pet's stomach, the attending veterinarian may cause the pet to vomit. A visual example of marijuana edible toxicity treatment was recently viewed on the (2016) cable TV show "Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet."

Anxiety, panting, agitation and/or profound lethargy may be manifested by the pet. Pets can show impaired balance (stagger, stumble, and fall), drooling, vomiting, diarrhea and may lose bowel and bladder control. These are symptoms that the pet may have ingested marijuana. There can be extreme responses to noises, movement, and other forms of sensory stimulation. These responses can manifest as trembling or jerking of the head or extremities. In severe cases, the responses may appear similar to seizures.

E-CIGARETTES / VAPE PENS

E-Cigarettes use, and vaping of liquid nicotine, is growing in popularity and as it does, so do health concerns regarding pets. Electronic cigarettes do not contain tobacco, but the liquid that is vaporized does contain nicotine. There are several reasons why you should be sure to keep E-Cigarettes/ Vape Pens out of the reach of your pets.

Common sense tells us that nicotine isn't something our pets should be exposed to, but the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center has seen an increase in nicotine related calls. Poison control experts warn that animals are sometimes drawn to old E-Cigarette cartridges or e-liquids because they have flavorings that smell like food. The ASPCA said dogs are the most common pets involved in nicotine poisoning cases, but sometimes cats are impacted too.

The first sign of nicotine poisoning in a pet generally begin within 30 minutes to an hour. The first symptom is vomiting. Pets may also develop diarrhea, drool uncontrollably, act agitated or have a fast heart rate, high temperature, panting, or nosebleed. If a pet consumes a higher dosage, you will see seizures or extreme lethargy. In some cases consumption of E-Cigarette nicotine by an animal can quickly lead to fatality.

Liquid nicotine poses particular threat because it is quickly absorbed through mucous membranes in the pet's mouth. If your dog eats a cigarette, the liver, may absorb most of the toxicity. However, liquid nicotine gets absorbed before it ever reaches the stomach causing a more immediate risk and a real emergency.

If you suspect that your pet has ingested nicotine (or any other poisonous substance) instantly call your vet or the Pet Poison Helpline at 1-800-213-6680 and take your pet to the veterinarian.

Strict precautions for all drugs that pertain to children must also be made for pets:

- Children and pets cannot read labels.
- Keep all marijuana edibles and E-Cigarette/Vape products, and other drugs away from children or pets in a high secure place.
- Never leave marijuana edibles, E-Cigarette/Vape products, or other drugs where children or pets can access them.
- In case of any mishap, instantly call your veterinarian or the Pet Poison Helpline.

RESOURCES, REFERENCES & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- How to Keep Your Pets Safe (<http://www.acdiavetclinic.com/news/vaping-dangers-how-to-keep-your-pets-safe/>)
- ASPCA Speaks Out About Vaping Dangers for Pets (<https://www.electroniccigarettesreviews.net/blog/aspca-speaks-out-about-vaping-dangers-for-pets>)
- Marijuana Intoxication in Cats and Dogs (<http://www.drbarchas.com/marijuana>)
- Nightline 20/20 (<http://abcnews.go.com/US/colo-vets-warn-edible-marijuana-threat-dogs/story?id=22701750>)
- Implementing the Oregon Medical Marijuana Act in Eugene, Oregon: Pets on Pot (<http://www.compassioncenter.net/marijuana-and-pets>)
- 'Stoner Dogs:' Colorado Veterinarians Say Marijuana Use Is On The Rise Among Dogs (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/02/stoner-dogscolorado-veter_n_1933361.html)