

## ■ Pets and Air Quality

Pets suddenly developing unpleasant odors may need to be checked by a veterinarian for infected wounds (abscesses), dental disease, anal sac infections, skin diseases, ear infections or other conditions. **Household odors** can indicate a need for greater air circulation due to lack of ventilation associated with energy efficient building construction or a moisture problem leading to the growth of mold. In short, the odor may indicate a health and/or a structural problem that needs correcting, rather than masking.

### Avoid using Air Fresheners and Room Deodorants

as they can give off an array of volatile organic chemicals<sup>1</sup> (28 VOCs are listed as potentially being emitted by these products) (Peterson & Talcott). VOCs have been associated with respiratory disease. For alternatives to air fresheners, have washable covers on furniture, pet beds, or floors where pets lounge, and change them regularly.



## ■ Pets and Mercury/Lead Containing Products

Pets can be poisoned by ingesting common household products. Do not buy trinkets, jewelry and toys for children—that may be contaminated with mercury or lead. Besides being harmful to the children, pets can be poisoned by eating them.



If you have any questions or need information about references and resources, please contact Dr. Diana Post at Rachel Carson Council  
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## Special Needs of:

### ■ Pet Rabbits

#### Heat Stress / Stroke

Make certain any rabbit kept outdoors has shade, good ventilation and access to cool drinking water. Rabbits can easily get heat stroke (that may be fatal) since their primary method of cooling is through the skin of their ears.



#### Antibiotic Hazards

Only give antibiotics to rabbits under a veterinarian's direct supervision, as some antibiotics can cause fatal diarrhea in rabbits. If rabbits accidentally consume antibiotics, they need immediate veterinary attention.

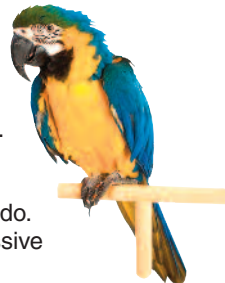
#### Fipronil Toxicity

Do not use the insecticide fipronil on rabbits. Potentially fatal reactions have been reported when fipronil has been applied to young or small rabbits.

### ■ Pet Birds

#### Avocado - Hazardous Food for Birds

Keep avocado away from pet birds. Toxic signs (difficulty breathing, depression, etc.) can occur 12 hours after birds have eaten avocado. Death may follow even with aggressive medical treatment.



#### Airborne Irritants

Do not use air fresheners, scented candles, aerosol sprays (including pesticides) or smoke around pet birds. The avian respiratory system is very sensitive and can easily develop breathing problems on exposure to airborne irritants.

#### Toxicity of PTFE (aka Teflon, Silverstone, etc.)

Keep pet birds away from PTFE-coated products such as non-stick cookware, self-cleaning ovens and shatterproof light bulbs that can produce fumes toxic to birds if heated above 260C (400F). At the first signs of PTFE toxicity in birds such as blinking, panting, and weakness, they should be removed immediately to fresh air. In most cases of high exposure, death occurs rapidly with no chance for successful medical intervention. (For further details see RCC's brochure, "Silent Killer of Birds in Our Care.")

### Rachel Carson Council

An Association for the Integrity of the Environment  
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# The Green Mantle™ Way

*Keeping our pets safe from toxic encounters has become an increasingly important responsibility*

Rachel Carson Council Inc.



## Steps we take

to safeguard our pets often prove equally beneficial to our immediate families, the society in which we live, and the environment as well. While some hazards to pets are specific in nature, the broader principles apply to a wide range of situations. Details are presented in the form of general rules.



### General Rules for protecting your pet from toxic encounters:

#### ■ Pets and Treatments

Always check with your veterinarian before treating a pet with any human-type medication.

Never use a pesticide product on cats if it is designated for use only on dogs.

#### ■ Pets and Plants

**Cats and plants:** Some indoor plants can be toxic to cats if eaten. Make sure any new house plants and/or cut flowers are safe for your feline friend, before bringing them home.



**Contact Rachel Carson Council, Inc. (RCC), with any questions about plant toxicity.**

*(Note: A **systemic pesticide** is one that if taken up by the plant through the roots travels to all parts of the plant. Thus if a systemic pesticide is added to the soil, the plant may become hazardous to pets, when eaten, even if the plant is not inherently toxic for them).*

#### ■ Pets and Pesticides

**Cats** may be especially sensitive to certain pesticides used directly on them or in their indoor environment. These include: **permethrin** and other **synthetic pyrethroids**, **lindane**, **carbamates**, and **organophosphates**. Applications of certain permethrin products to a dog living in the same household as a cat can result in a secondary toxicity to the cat, due to transference of the chemical to the cat.

Dogs are especially sensitive to the herbicide **2,4-D**. Scottish terriers (Scotties) have been found to be significantly more likely to develop bladder cancer when exposed to **2,4-D type herbicides** (chlorophenoxy chemicals).

#### ■ Pets and PBDEs

**PBDEs** Polybrominated diphenyl ethers are synthetic chemicals found in carpets, furniture, cushions, mattresses and electronics, where they act as flame retardants. PBDEs have been associated with feline thyroid disease. There has been an epidemic of thyroid disease in cats that started in the 1980s and is believed to be from household dust and cat food contaminated with flame retardants. Cats with this disease exhibit weight loss, increased appetite, hair loss, and irritability. Cats and humans are the only mammals known to have high incidences of hyperthyroidism. Ongoing studies suggest a connection between human



hyperthyroidism and PBDE exposure. Manufacturers have pledged to phase out the shorter chain PBDEs. The longest chain (deca) PBDE is still allowed to be marketed.

*(Note: the states of Washington and Maine have proposed banning the deca PBDE).*

#### ■ Pets and Food

**Foods to avoid with dogs and cats:** anything containing **xylitol** (used as a sweetener in sugar free products). It can cause hypoglycemia as well as liver failure and other life threatening conditions. In addition, do not give dogs **macadamia nuts, chocolate, raisins** and **grapes**, or **onions**.



#### ■ Pets and Soil Amendments, Fertilizers

Dogs can have problems when they are exposed to and consume **fertilizers composed of blood meal**, or **fertilizers with iron at levels greater than 1%**. **Cacao bean mulch** may be hazardous to dogs.

