

HERVEY BAY VETERINARY SURGERY

Owner Information Series

CANE TOAD POISONING



Australia has some of the world's most poisonous animals and one that poses a threat to our pets and our wildlife is the Cane Toad. Cane toads tend to be most prevalent in the warmer months although in tropical north Queensland they are present all year round!

The giant tropical Cane Toad was introduced to Australia to control the sugar cane beetle and has become a major pest in tropical areas. The toads excrete a potent and rapidly acting toxin from glands around the neck area which is a little bit like a hallucinogenic drug.

Cane toad poisonings in cats are rare - they seem to be more aware of the risks but toad poisoning in dogs is very common especially in puppies and terrier breeds as they find the movement of toads intriguing and often irresistible.

How does Cane Toad poisoning occur?

When a dog mouths a toad the toxin is released as a sort of slime from behind the neck and 'sticks' to the gums & tongue of the pet. The toxin in the 'slime' is rapidly absorbed by the dog across the membranes of the mouth. Symptoms depend on the amount of toxin absorbed and the length of time from when the pet was exposed to the toxin. Initially the dog will drool or froth, then may develop muscle tremors which progress to seizures and possibly cardiac arrest.

Signs of Cane Toad Poisoning:

- Profuse salivation, drooling and/or frothing from the mouth



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- Very red and slimy gums
- Pawing at the mouth
- Vomiting
- Disorientation
- Shivers and/or tremors
- Muscle rigidity or spasms
- Convulsions or seizures
- Very rapid heart rate and/or heart beat irregularities
- Death

First Aid Measures:

- Hold your pet's mouth down toward the floor and using wet cloth, wipe the inside of your pet's mouth – teeth, gums, tongue and roof. They will not appreciate this however you must get the toxin off of the mucosal surfaces.
- Rinse the cloth in clean water and continue this process for at least 10 minutes.
- If your pet settles down after wiping and rinsing the mouth out, keep them confined for a few hours and monitor them closely.

When to seek veterinary attention:

In mild cases, these first aid measures is all that will be necessary, but you should watch your pet carefully for a few hours after contact with the toad. If there is any worsening of symptoms, such as disorientation, shivers, tremors or muscle stiffness you should seek veterinary help immediately.

Cane toad toxicity can be fatal. If you are at all concerned, please contact us immediately.