



Rock salt poisoning

RSPCA COMPANION ANIMALS PET CARE FACTSHEET



ROCK SALT POISONING IN PETS

Rock salt is a mixture of salt (sodium chloride) and grit, and is used to help de-ice roads in winter. Rock salt can be a danger to pets such as dogs and cats, if they lick it from their paws or fur.



It is difficult to say how much needs to be eaten for signs of toxicity to be seen. Even a small amount of pure salt can be very dangerous to pets. Ingestion can result in a high blood sodium concentration which can cause thirst, vomiting and lethargy, and in severe cases there is a risk of convulsions and kidney damage.

Most cases involve animals that have walked through gritted snow and then lick or chew it off their paws as they can find it irritating. It is therefore important to thoroughly wipe your pet's feet and the fur on his/her legs and tummy after a walk or time outside. If he/she is showing any signs of discomfort after possible exposure to rock salt, use a mild, pet-safe shampoo and warm water to wash the affected areas, and dry your pet's fur completely with a towel after washing.



Any animal suspected of ingestion of rock salt must be assessed by a vet immediately. This is important as signs can be non-specific and a blood test will be required to check the blood sodium concentration. Immediate veterinary treatment will be needed to rehydrate the animal and stabilise their sodium levels. The exact treatment will depend on the blood sodium concentration and the animal's clinical condition. Owners should never attempt to induce vomiting; only a vet should do this.

The RSPCA has been asked whether antifreeze is added to rock salt. We are not aware of this practice and do not think it is likely, as adding salt to water lowers the freezing temperature and so has an 'antifreeze' effect in itself. If you are concerned about the composition of rock salt in your area, we would advise contacting your local authority for information.



For more information on preventing poisoning in pets and what to do if poisoning is suspected, visit the advice section about [poisoning](#) on the RSPCA website.

Never 'watch and wait' in any case of suspected poisoning. If you suspect your pet has been poisoned, act fast and contact a vet for advice immediately.



USEFUL LINKS:

- Poisoning in pets: www.rspca.org.uk/poisoning
- Poisoning in dogs: www.rspca.org.uk/allaboutanimals/pets/dogs/health/poisoning
- Common dog poisons: www.rspca.org.uk/allaboutanimals/pets/dogs/health/poisoning/common
- Poisoning in cats (includes link to leaflet about common cat poisons): www.rspca.org.uk/allaboutanimals/pets/cats/health/poisoning
- Antifreeze: www.rspca.org.uk/allaboutanimals/pets/cats/health/poisoning/antifreeze
- Find a vet: www.rspca.org.uk/findavet



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