

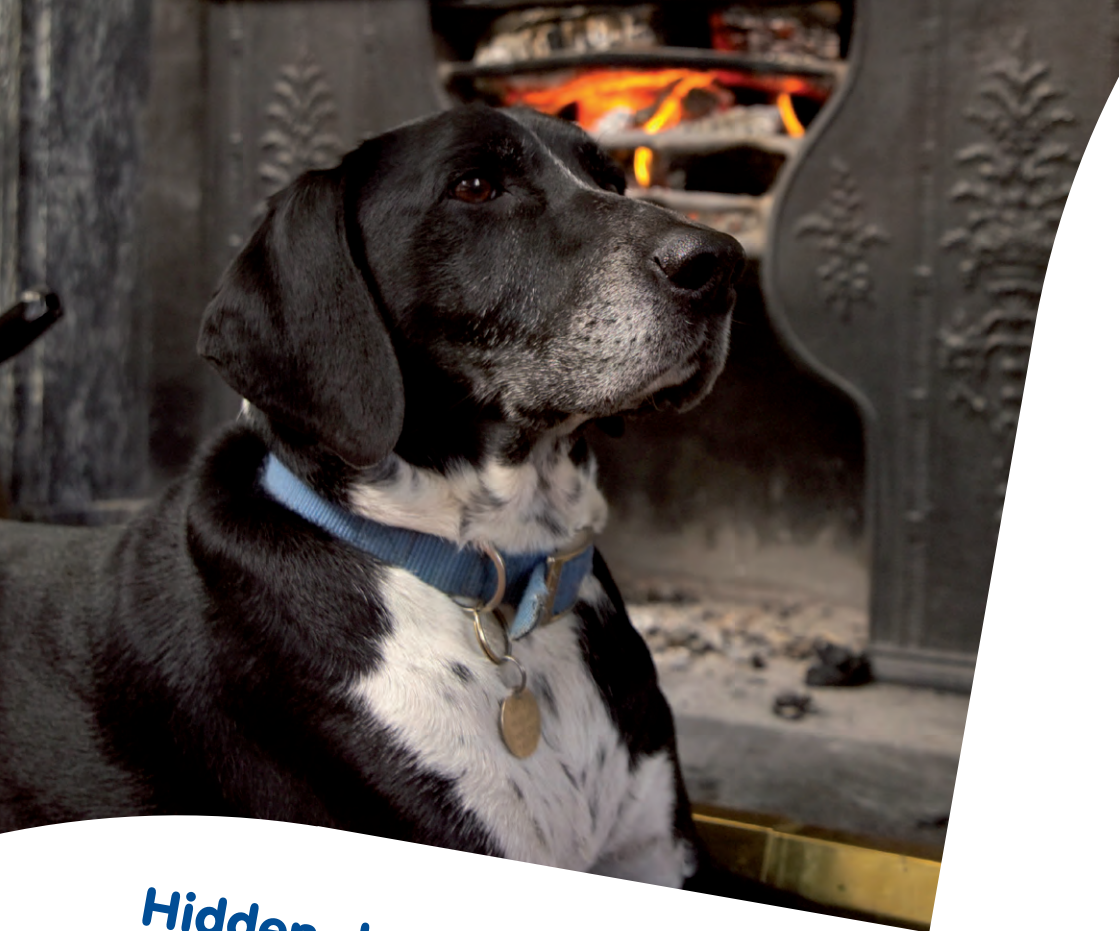
DOG 9

Hidden dangers



BLUE FOR
PETS
CROSS

The charity dedicated to helping sick, injured and homeless pets since 1897.



Hidden dangers

“Prevention is better than cure” – and sometimes accidents can be avoided. Try to think ahead and foresee dangers, for example, by keeping household chemicals in a safe place. Dogs cannot think about the consequences of their actions – but you can think for them! Read through this leaflet to learn about common dangers and their consequences, often treated at Blue Cross animal hospitals.

Among the most common problems are injuries following road accidents or dog-fights, and illnesses resulting from swallowing objects, medicines or household chemicals.

If you think your dog has eaten something dangerous, contact the vet immediately. Have a pen to hand if out-of-hours, as you may be given another number to ring. Keep any packaging so that you can tell the vet exactly what the substance is. Do not try to make your dog sick without asking the vet. If your dog is staggering or fitting, clear away obstacles so he cannot hurt himself, and make the room dark and quiet.

Accidents out and about

- Traffic is one of the greatest dangers. Never let your dog out on his own. However well behaved your pet, always have your dog on a lead near the road. Train your dog to come when called – see the pet care leaflet, Training your dog (D16). This is useful to get him away from potential hazards.
- Neutering reduces the risk of roaming – causing accidents – for both sexes, and also has health benefits – see the pet care leaflet, Basic healthcare (D6).
- Get your dog used to being with other dogs from an early age – see the pet care leaflet, Socialising (D17). A dog that does not know how to “introduce himself” properly is more at risk of being in a fight. Many vets now run “puppy socialisation classes” where young dogs can learn to make friends even before their vaccinations are complete and these are an excellent idea.
- Have regular (at least annual) check-ups at the vet. This visit may pick up hidden problems. It is better for the vet to discover that your dog has a heart problem than to be stranded on a weekend walk in the middle of the countryside with a semi-collapsed dog.
- Dogs love to chase sticks. However, catching a stick the wrong way can cause horrifying injuries, which can be very difficult to treat. Throw a plastic but indestructible object for your pet to chase – but choose something too large to swallow. Dog toys are much safer than sticks, easier to throw and more chewy!
- Choose rubber balls carefully. If they are small enough to fit inside the mouth, there is a risk of them lodging in the back of the throat during play and causing choking.
- Bones are not good for dogs. Every year so many dogs end up in vets’ surgeries as a consequence of being given (or finding) a bone. Problems range from gastrointestinal upsets to life-threatening illness if chunks wedge in the gullet or bowel. Give specially designed indestructible chews instead. Put a heavy top on your kitchen bin to prevent your dog getting leftover bones.



- Grass seeds – the ones that look like barley ears – are rarely life threatening, but they commonly enter ears and stick in feet. Check your dog after a walk and remove them. Trim feathered ears and paws so that long hairs do not trap seeds.
 - Carry your dog on escalators, as it is easy for their feet to become trapped, and appalling injuries may result.
 - Protect balconies or windows as falls may cause multiple fractures or even kill.
 - Whenever you see your dog chewing an unidentified item, beware! Avoid shouting at or chasing your dog, as this may turn the pursuit into a game. Instead use a toy or food as a distraction to call your dog away.
 - If your pet likes swimming, then avoid ponds where algae – a blue-green or green paint-like scum – is growing.
- Some types produce toxins that can be irritants, or even lethally poisonous. And do not forget that although most dogs like water, not all dogs are good swimmers! Dogs can and do drown in rivers and the sea. Those that have been in “near drowning” situations should see a vet, as complications can develop following inhalation of water.
- It is not only dogs shut in cars that get heat stroke – although dogs should never be left in cars in the summer, even if the windows are slightly open. Vigorous play on a hot day can be enough to bring it on, especially in short nosed breeds such as boxers and Pekingese, or in pets that are overweight. Consider clipping dogs with thick coats.
 - Areas of sparse hair are at risk of sunburn. Exposing white-coloured areas of coat to the sun may increase the likelihood of skin cancer. Either keep your dog indoors between 10.00am and 4.00pm, or use a sunblock. Buy a special sunblock from your vet or use unscented waterproof sunblock of at least factor 15. Sometimes vulnerable areas can be covered by a T-shirt.

Most accidents occur at home!

- Keep all cleaning and garden chemicals safely shut away, and keep your dog out of the way when you are using them. Products containing metaldehyde, such as some slug pellets and firelighters, are extremely toxic, and should be kept away from pets. Antifreeze and de-icer fluids taste sweet, but are also poisonous. Rat poison is obviously dangerous – and eating dead poisoned rats is another way of swallowing it. Many rat poisons are colour coded. If you know the colour of the bait or have the packaging available, tell the vet. Seek advice even if your pet seems unharmed, as the effects are often not immediate.
- As with people, dogs are vulnerable to carbon monoxide poisoning. This colourless, odourless gas is present in car exhaust and the fumes of incorrectly maintained fuel-fired heaters. If your dog sleeps next to the boiler, make sure it is regularly serviced. You can buy carbon monoxide detectors from hardware stores. Signs of poisoning include drowsiness, lethargy and weakness. Remove the patient to fresh air immediately and then straight to the vet.

- Dogs can also suffer from smoke inhalation in house fires. Animals rescued from burning buildings should be taken to the vet for an immediate check-up.
- During and after parties be aware that alcohol and cigarette butts (or illegal drugs) may harm your dog. Products containing nicotine, such as chewing gum, may be dangerous if swallowed. If there are fireworks, it is not just the flashes and bangs that you should keep your pet away from; fireworks are poisonous if chewed.



- Always read the label before you give your pet any medicines. Never give your dog human medicines and put them away from reach so they are not chewed. Painkillers such as ibuprofen and paracetamol are particularly dangerous. Vitamin and mineral supplements can also be dangerous, particularly iron tablets and products containing zinc.
- Only ever give your dog medicines that are designed and licensed for use in dogs. If your dog is unwell, it is best to always seek veterinary advice before giving any treatments to your pet. Be especially careful with older pets. Follow the label instructions carefully, give the correct dose for your pet's size or body weight, and phone the vet if you aren't sure what to do.

"One tablet twice a day" does not mean two tablets together in the morning. Keep "palatable" tablets well out of harm's way. Dogs may steal and eat these with disastrous results. Never give dog medicines to a cat.

- Read the instructions on flea products carefully. Check that the product is to be used on the animal – never use a spray intended for use around the house.
- Batteries of all types are dangerous if swallowed

You are what you eat!

Keep your dog out of the kitchen when you are cooking. Dogs are naturally interested in human activity, and accidental spills of hot fat or oil and boiling water can cause horrific injuries that can leave permanent damage.

Dogs that eat bread dough as it is rising experience initial discomfort as the dough rises in the stomach, and may then be poisoned by chemicals produced as the dough ferments. Homemade playdough can be even more dangerous because of its high salt content.

Giving mineral supplements to big dogs to encourage healthy bones may actually cause bone and joint problems. If you have a large or giant breed puppy, such as a Great Dane, discuss a feeding plan with your vet, as there is some evidence that



excessive feeding may cause bone and joint diseases.

Chocolate can be toxic, sometimes in quite small quantities. Dark chocolate, cooking chocolate and cocoa powder, can all make your pet unwell. Milk chocolate is less dangerous, but can produce symptoms depending on the amount. A medium sized bar eaten by a small dog can be enough – so be wary at Christmas when dogs may chew through wrapping. Symptoms include: vomiting, restlessness, twitchiness and walking difficulties. Some cases are fatal. Raisins and grapes can sometimes – but unpredictably – cause serious poisoning, so are best avoided. Macadamia nuts and onions – raw, cooked or growing – are also poisonous. Sugar-free products such as chewing gum, which contain the sweetener Xylitol, can cause a disastrous fall in blood sugar levels and collapse, which may result in death. Always contact your vet if you think your pet may have eaten any of these foods.

In the garden

There is an endless list of poisonous plants. It is best to keep an eye on your dog when he is out, and avoid letting him chew on anything. If you see your dog chewing a plant, distract him with a favourite toy – chasing him and shouting can convert plant chewing into a dangerous game. Azalea, daffodil,



dieffenbachia, rhododendron, sago palm and yew are among the more toxic plants encountered. Horse chestnut twigs, leaves, and conkers can also be poisonous.

Bone meal can cause gastric intestinal upsets even when eaten in small amounts, and may also contain toxic insecticides or fertilisers. Large quantities can produce a blockage of the bowel. If you are gardening with bone meal, the smell can attract the interest of “dogs that dig”, which may be unfortunate if what you are planting is toxic, such as daffodil or autumn crocus bulbs. Snacking from the compost heap can cause illness – the moulds in decaying compost can produce vomiting, twitching, tremors and worse.

For further information, see the pet care leaflet, Basic first aid (D10).

Happy, healthy pets

Blue Cross advice leaflets are packed full of top tips to help owners with their pet questions. They cover a wide range of topics, from training a puppy to caring for an older cat. So if you need some support to help you with a pet problem, whether it's about a dog or a degu, we're here for you.

You can read and download our leaflets online at www.bluecross.org.uk

Visit our website to take advantage of all its features, including:

- blog posts from Blue Cross experts
- latest news
- events near you
- pets needing new homes

Or you can join in the chat on our online communities:

 www.facebook.com/thebluecrossuk

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Blue Cross

Blue Cross has been dedicated to the health and happiness of pets since 1897. Abandoned or unwanted, ill or injured – we do what's needed to give every pet a healthy life in a happy home. We're a charity, so the more help you give us, the more help we can give pets.

How you can help

Blue Cross doesn't receive any government funding, so we rely on the generosity of pet lovers like you. There are lots of ways you can help the sick, injured and abandoned pets in our care, like making a donation, fundraising for us or leaving us a legacy.

Please call us on 0300 777 1897 or visit www.bluecross.org.uk



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