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Rat Bait Toxicity

What is rat bait?

There are many different forms of rat bait but the most common are anticoagulant rodenticides. They come in many bright colours – Blue, Green, and Pink – and are regularly used to kill rodents at home. The issue presents when a pet accidentally eats the bait.



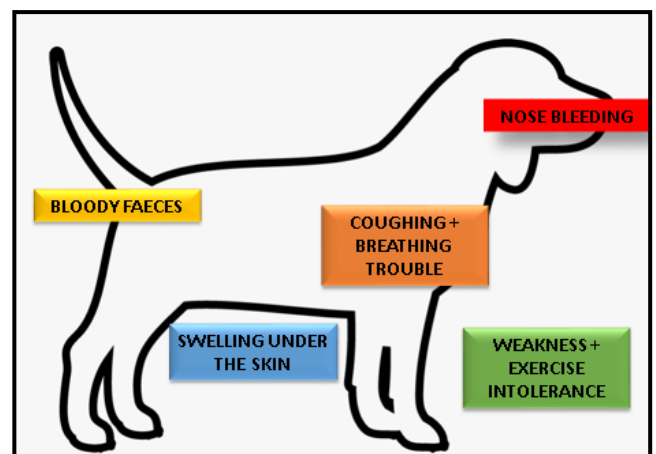
Why is it dangerous to my pet?

Rat bait inhibits the body's ability to clot blood. If an animal cannot clot its blood this can result in spontaneous bleeding and ultimately lead to death. Bleeding can occur anywhere in the body and is commonly first seen under the skin, in the eyes or as a persistent cough.

Rat bait reduces the amount of vitamin K in an animal's body. Vitamin K is essential to activate blood clots when necessary. Without the vitamin K it is like trying to bake a cake without flour – you have all the other ingredients but will still be unsuccessful. Animals have a natural store of Vitamin K that lasts for 2-3 days this is very important when it comes to monitoring and treating pets for a toxicity.

What are the signs?

A very **IMPORTANT** aspect with rat bait toxicity is that clinical signs will not develop for **TWO to THREE DAYS** after consumption. If you suspect or observe a pet has eaten rat bait, it is important to bring them to the vet immediately for the best **PROGNOSIS**. If rat bait consumption goes unnoticed for 2-3 days signs include →



What happens if I see my pet eat rat bait?

1. Please bring your pet to Murray Bridge Veterinary Clinic immediately. Bring the rat bait packet with you if possible.
2. Your vet will medically induce vomiting to get the bait out of the dog's stomach.
3. The vet will inspect the vomit for the bait and make a decision to treat or monitor with a blood test.
4. We often ask you come back to the clinic in 48 hours' time for a small blood test (PT/APTT).
 - This blood test is run here at MBVC.
 - It take approximately 15 minutes.
 - The reason we wait 48hours is because of the delayed effect of rat bait. If we do not check that your pet can clot their blood adequately it will be **life threatening**.
5. Depending on the results your vet will discuss if treatment needs to be started.
 - Treatment is a 4-6 week course of Vitamin K.
6. 48 hours after finishing the medication it is **VERY IMPORTANT** to run the blood test **again** to make sure the animal is making its own vitamin K – otherwise treatment will need to be continued.

What happens if my pet is not treated immediately after ingestion?

As described above we would expect to see evidence of bleeding as the pet would not be able to clot its blood. This can be a **TRUE EMERGENCY**. If this occurs it may lead to multiple days in hospital, blood transfusions and long courses of Vitamin K treatment. In severe cases the pet may die.

Blood test after finishing vitamin K treatment

Even after 4 weeks of vitamin K treatment it is **VERY IMPORTANT** that we complete another blood test to ensure your pets blood will clot. It is common to still see signs of rat bait toxicity as long as 4-6 weeks after ingestion. It is also important your pet has their blood test at the correct time, even as little as 8 hours either side of 48 hours after finishing the tablets can make a big difference. A test done too early and we won't pick up the problem yet – which can lead to life threatening bleeding. If you cannot get to the clinic on the day the blood test is required please let us know so we can organise additional vitamin K tablets so the timing is right.

Give the last tablet in the morning 2 days before the appointment for your blood test.
(E.g. Last tablet given Tuesday morning for the blood test appointment on Thursday).

Future Prevention

Many pets are repeat offenders so please ensure there is no access to rat bait on your property. The best prevention is having no rat bait at all as the risk to your pet is very high.

If there are ever any concerns please contact Murray Bridge Veterinary Clinic.