

As more internet pharmacies become available, it will be more tempting to order veterinary medications online not only for their convenience, but for their “discounted” pricing. We at Linda Mar Veterinary Hospital and Coastal Cat Clinic are very conscious of the expense of drugs and the need for obtaining convenient medications. We “script out” medications to local pharmacies, including Costco (a great source of low cost medications). We have a longstanding relationship with VetCentric, a home delivery veterinary pharmacy which ships routine medications, specially compounded drugs, and prescription diets directly to our clients. As our distributor, VetCentric has made it a priority to match or beat current prices for heartworm preventatives, flea and tick preventatives, and arthritis medications when compared to PetMeds (a large internet retailer). Some other pharmacies we support include Golden Gate and Wedgewood Pharmacies for reasonably priced medications and compounded drugs.

Two additional concerns of ours are the safety and quality of the medications for our clients. There are several important differences between medications that are dispensed from Linda Mar/Coastal Cat, your local pharmacies and VetCentric, and those medications from internet or catalogue pharmacies like PetMeds. Our products are shipped directly from the manufacturer, or supplier warehouse, to us. These products are shipped overnight and stored in specific temperature controlled environments. Some internet and catalog goods can be second hand products that are purchased from a veterinarian and then resold several times. Storage of these products during this process is not well controlled and not regulated or inspected.

The second difference is the manufacturer guarantee. Several products, such as heartworm preventatives, are 100% guaranteed by the manufacturer to be safe and effective. This means that if there is ever any product failure, or problem, the manufacturer will pay for the treatment of your pet. Because there is no regulation beyond the primary purchasing veterinarian, the manufacturer will **NOT** extend this guarantee to catalog or Internet customers. VetCentric is the **only** nonresident pharmacy recommended by the California Veterinary Medical Association, and complies with all laws and regulations to maintain the manufacturer’s warranty.

Lastly, catalogs and internet pharmacies often bypass the doctor- patient relationship. For a veterinarian to issue a legal and valid prescription there must be a current doctor-patient relationship. This means that your pet must have been examined by the veterinarian who is issuing the prescription within the past 12 months. Most medications require prescriptions and laboratory testing of your pet prior to, and during use. This helps to prevent adverse reactions and ensure proper dosing.

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Rodenticide Toxicity in Dogs

By Dr. Angelique Cucaro, DVM.

Quite often during this time of year, poisons are used to eliminate ground squirrels, rats and gophers. These poisons are distributed in the form of baits for use in homes and yards for pest control. Recently Diphacinone, a new and common rodenticide, which acts as a long-acting anti-coagulant to cause internal bleeding, has been marketed for commercial and home use. There are other chemicals that act similarly such as brodifacoum, chlorophacinone and warfarin.

All of these poisons are usually in the form of brightly colored green or blue pellets, granules or blocks and are highly palatable. The problem is that while they are meant to be attractive to rodents, they attract dogs who will readily consume these. To give you an idea of the toxicity of these compounds, ½ a box of rat bait will kill most 20 lb dogs.

Although the owner may be careful not to have any poisons in his home, the dog is exposed to it while they’re visiting family and friends. Exposure can happen when moving into a new home or if the dog gets out and goes to the neighbor’s home or yard.

Some owners may notice their dog eating something, but most of the time, this goes unnoticed. Direct ingestion by cats is rare, but for cats that hunt, poisoning can occur secondarily through ingested prey.

With anti-coagulants, there is a delay between the time of ingestion and onset of signs usually, 1-5 days. If you suspect that your dog has eaten rat or gopher bait, don’t take a “wait and see approach”. Contact your veterinarian immediately. If it is within 1-2 hours of ingestion, vomiting can be induced, and internal bleeding can be averted. However, in most cases, owners have not noticed ingestion, and bring the dog to the veterinarian only when signs are noted. These can include some or all: lethargy, decreased appetite, fatigue, exercise intolerance, difficulty breathing, coughing, vomiting or urinating blood, bleeding from the nostrils, presence of hematomas (blood clots under the skin), dark stool color (melena).

In most cases, veterinarians must treat according to the animal’s presenting signs and based on the suspicion of ingestion of rodenticide. Exposure to rat or gopher bait can be confirmed with blood tests (prolonged bleeding times due to the reduction of clotting factors). Treatment consists of administration of Vitamin K₁ since this vitamin is inhibited by the poison; this is initiated by injections and followed by oral treatment. This is continued for the length of duration that the poison is present, usually for 2-4 weeks. With animals that are anemic and/or with severe hemorrhaging, blood transfusions are needed to give new red blood cells and clotting factors. Supportive care and hospitalization are needed for initial phases of treatment.

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It is our hospital policy not to authorize or approve prescription requests sent to us by fax or phone from internet or catalogue suppliers. We can no longer assume the intermediary responsibility of ordering drugs through these pharmacies, or call or fax internet pharmacies other than VetCentric. For clients that want to continue their relationship with such pharmacies as PetMeds, we ask that you request a **written** prescription from the veterinarian for medications. The written prescription can be presented, mailed or faxed **by you** to any pharmacy accepting California veterinary prescriptions. Please allow 48 hours for written prescriptions to be requested and completed (not including mailing time to you if warranted). The prescriptions can be picked up after the 48 hour request window 7 days a week during normal office hours.

When deciding where to purchase medicines for your pet, remember to balance any cost savings and convenience with the safety and quality of the medication. Our goal at Linda Mar Veterinary Hospital and Coastal Cat Clinic is to continue providing a trusted source of veterinary medications that will serve your pet's health needs. 🐾

If treated appropriately and timely, most animals will survive. But further exposure must be prevented since an animal won't "learn his lesson" and given the chance, would willingly eat it again.

Some product names of the anti-coagulant family are listed to facilitate recognition of these and to know if you have them around your home. This list is, by no means, complete. Products containing brodifacoum are Talon, Havoc, D-Con and the product containing bromadiolone is Contrac.® There are other products that act by different mechanisms to poison rodents such as strychnine, zinc phosphate, cholecalciferol (Quintox, Rampage, Mouse-Be-Gone ®) and bromethalin (Assault, Trounce, Vengeance ®).

If you have any questions regarding your pet and poisons, don't hesitate to contact your veterinarian.

