

EASTER LILY TOXICITY IN CATS

A COMMON, LITTLE-KNOWN, DEVASTATING TOXIN FOR CATS

Easter is just around the corner and it is a time when many clients will be decorating their homes with the traditional Easter lily. Cat owners need to beware that Easter Lilies, Tiger lilies, Japanese show lilies and various day lilies are profoundly toxic to cats. All parts of the plant - leaves, stems and flowers - are toxic. Consuming less than one leaf can produce severe toxicosis and death.

The ingested toxin causes kidney failure within 24 to 48 hours. It is unknown if dogs are sensitive to the toxin found in lilies.

There is no specific antidote for the lily toxin. If a cat or dog is seen eating a lily plant vomiting needs to be induced immediately followed by the administration of gastroprotectants and aggressive treatment with intravenous fluids. If treatment is begun early enough the recovery rate is satisfactory. If kidney failure develops, the prognosis is poor.

SIGNS: Vomiting, drooling, loss of appetite and depression will occur within 2 hours of ingestion. Signs may temporarily subside but the active toxin will quickly affect the kidneys leading to signs of kidney failure: increased urination, depression, vomiting and dehydration. Death will occur within 5 days.

TREATMENT: If a cat is seen eating an Easter lily a veterinarian needs to be contacted immediately. Initial treatment involves rapid decontamination of the intestinal tract followed by aggressive intravenous fluid therapy. Treatment should be started within 6 hours of lily ingestion. Postponing treatment more than 18 hours almost always results in kidney failure and death. With prompt treatment full recovery is possible.

PREVENTION: Cats can be extremely inquisitive and may graze on plants in and around a house or garden. We encourage all cat owners to avoid placing lilies where cats reside – indoors or outdoors.

Please protect your pets and if you chose the Easter lily to decorate your home keep it out of reach. Better yet, chose a different spring/Easter plant for your home and be really safe!

It might be useful to print and to share with others in your family or with friends.

Have a Happy Easter!!