

Cats and Flea Control Products



Fleas can be a major problem for cat owners. Not only are these tiny creatures a nuisance, they are also the cause of many diseases such as flea bite anemia, flea bite dermatitis and tapeworm infestation. Flea control is often a necessary step in your cat's health care.

The eradication of fleas from our animals and our homes necessitates the use of products containing insecticides, either in the form of a mousse, spot-on, oral suspension, powder or spray mist. While there are many safe insecticide products available for use on cats, caution must be used. Cat owners should be careful when using flea products on or around their cats. Products should always be used strictly according to their label directions.

The following are some guidelines for cat owners to follow when choosing and applying a flea control product:

Never use insecticides on very young kittens, pregnant queens, debilitated or elderly cats without consulting your veterinarian. With such cats, you may want to consider avoiding the use of some insecticides directly on your pet. Instead, you could comb the fleas off the cat with a flea comb then submerge the fleas in a small container of soapy water. This would also be a good alternative for cats who love being groomed but who violently refuse baths or the application of a spray.

Before using any product on your cat, read the label instructions completely. If you do not completely understand the instructions, you should contact the manufacturer or your veterinarian for clarification. Observe the species and age requirements listed on the label. Never use a product labeled "for use on dogs only" on your cats. Cats react very differently than dogs to some insecticides. Some dog products can be deadly to cats, even in tiny amounts.

Use caution when using products that contain organophosphates in your house or on your cat. Cats seem to be sensitive to certain organophosphate insecticides. Currently, there are few flea products in the United States labeled for use on cats that contain organophosphates as an active ingredient. The few that can be used on cats contain safer types of organophosphate. However, many household sprays and products that are specifically labeled "for use on dogs only" are widely available. Again, avoid these dog products!

Never use flea control products that contain "permethrin" on your cats, unless they are specifically labeled for use on cats. There are some products that are labeled for use on cats that contain small concentrations of permethrin, usually less than 0.1%. When used according to the label instructions, these can be used safely in cats.

However, there are many permethrin products available over the counter for use on "dogs only." These contain high concentrations (45-60%) of permethrin insecticide. These permethrin products are labeled for use on dogs, but, even a few drops of concentrated permethrin could be lethal to cats. The reason for this species difference is yet unknown.

Exposed cats can develop uncontrollable seizures within hours of concentrated permethrin application. Some may tremor for several days. The fatality rate of untreated cats exposed to such products is high. Proper treatment by a veterinarian can often prevent death.



Always use caution when using shampoos, sprays, topical spot-ons or mousse near your cat's eyes, ears and genitalia. Accidental exposure could cause mild irritation to these sensitive tissues.

When using a fogger or a home premise spray, make sure to remove all pets from the house for the time period specified on the container. Food and water bowls should be removed from the area also. Allow time for the product to dry completely before returning your cats to your home. Open windows or use fans to "air out" the household before returning your cats to the treated area. Strong fumes can be irritating to your cat's eyes and upper respiratory system.

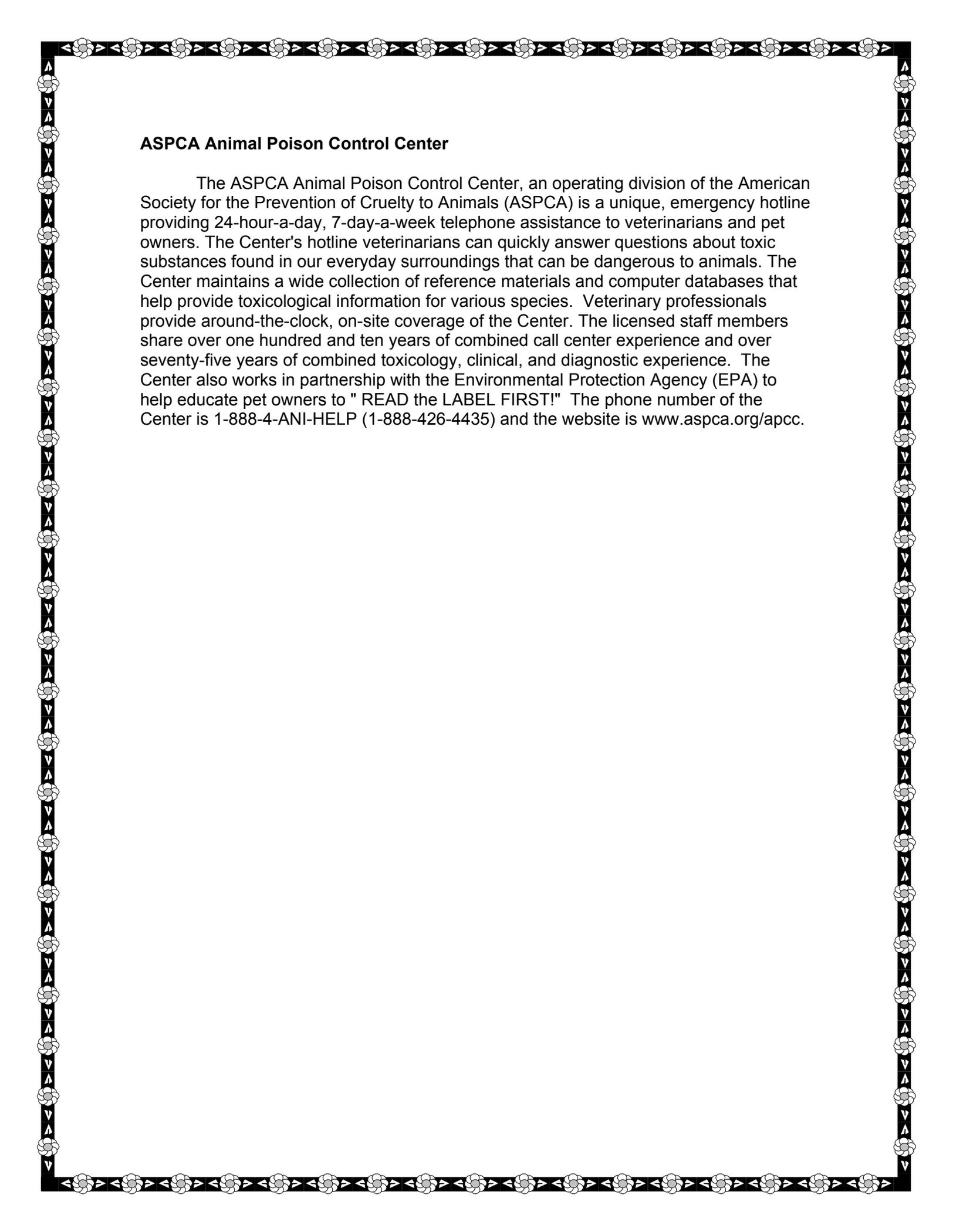
If you are uncertain about the usage of any household product, contact the product's manufacturer or your veterinarian to explain the directions before use of the product.

Insect growth regulators like lufenuron, methoprene and pyriproxyfen can be used in combination or alone with flea control products. They can help break the flea life cycle by inhibiting flea maturation. Growth regulators have minimal adverse effects and can improve the efficacy when used in combination with adult flea insecticides. You should consult your veterinarian or pest control specialist for advice concerning proper use of these products.

Just because a product is labeled to be a "natural" product does not mean that the product is completely safe. Many such "natural" products can be harmful when used inappropriately on cats. For example, d-limonene and linalool are citrus extracts that are used as flea control agents. Though they are natural products, they still can cause harmful side effects if used improperly.

Observe your cat closely after using flea products. If your cat exhibits unusual behavior, or becomes depressed, weak or uncoordinated, you should seek veterinary advice.

Once again, ALWAYS read the label. This could save the life of your cat!



ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center

The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center, an operating division of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) is a unique, emergency hotline providing 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week telephone assistance to veterinarians and pet owners. The Center's hotline veterinarians can quickly answer questions about toxic substances found in our everyday surroundings that can be dangerous to animals. The Center maintains a wide collection of reference materials and computer databases that help provide toxicological information for various species. Veterinary professionals provide around-the-clock, on-site coverage of the Center. The licensed staff members share over one hundred and ten years of combined call center experience and over seventy-five years of combined toxicology, clinical, and diagnostic experience. The Center also works in partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to help educate pet owners to "READ the LABEL FIRST!" The phone number of the Center is 1-888-4-ANI-HELP (1-888-426-4435) and the website is www.aspca.org/apcc.