

Dog Poisoning

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An unfortunate but very common occurrence that vets encounter especially in Cyprus and during the hunting season is the poisoning (whether deliberate or not) of their hunting companions...their dogs, whilst out in the fields tracking down game.

We live in a country where sadly, virtually anyone can acquire pesticides and their reasons for use are sometimes quite unorthodox, thus resulting in the poisoning of innocent hunting dogs and other animals. These pesticides even though harmless to cultivations/plants can prove to be extremely harmful and even fatal should they be ingested by humans or animals.

On arrival at a hunting site, the hunter as usual parks his car and gets out, letting his dog roam free to get acquainted with the surroundings. The first and natural instinct of the dog is to "sniff around" and mark his scent around the area, following this he will track with nose down any familiar scents and new ones, frequently picking up things in its mouth. If poisoned within seconds the dog will start to shake fitfully and foam will appear at the mouth. He can lose balance and collapse.

A hunter should learn to recognize and differentiate the symptoms of poisoning and should be able to act immediately should the dog display any of the following symptoms:

- Foaming at the mouth
- Fits and/or Convulsions shaking the entire body
- Loss of balance
- Loss of coordination with uncontrolled movements.

Following any of these symptoms the owner/hunter should provoke vomiting.

This can be done either by administering an emetic in the form of injection or syrup, or by the use of salt water.

Within 2 - 3 minutes the dog should start to vomit. At this point the owner should proceed to give the dog an antidote, which in usual cases is Atropine, the dosage is given in accordance to body weight and severity of symptoms.

As soon as these steps have been carried out the animal should be immediately transported to the nearest Vet.

If the symptoms have subsided or lessened then there will be enough time to transport the animal. On arrival at the vet the owner must make it clear that the dog has been poisoned so as not to waste time waiting a turn, as time is critical.

He must make sure that he tells the vet exactly what therapy has already been carried out on the animal. The vet may then proceed to pump out the stomach and will put the animal on a drip containing various tonics until all the animals symptoms have stopped and has normal overall reactions.

Before an outing in the fields the hunter should always be prepared with the following items:

- An injectable emetic, emetic syrup or salt water
- Atropine, cortisone, syringes and needles
- A leash to control the dog

Early recognition of symptoms and having the simple but necessary first aid kit can save a companion's life.

Now to another type of poisoning, equally dangerous and extremely treacherous is by the use of "Rat Poisons".

Here again hunters need to be able to recognize the symptoms (that don't appear until about 2 - 3 days later), and be aware of the different forms and shapes that this type of poison is presented in.

In Cyprus rat poison is available in small discs of blue/green colour, very similar to small soaps, or small colourful grains. The discs can be found nailed to tree trunks and the grains placed at the roots of trees. If the hunter discovers his dog eating anything remotely resembling the above mentioned poisons he should immediately provoke vomiting and contact his vet at once for further necessary treatment.

As previously stated the symptoms from this type of poisoning could take up to three days to manifest themselves by which time it could be too late. These poisons produce anticoagulants causing internal bleeding and haemorrhaging from any of the orifices in the body but mostly from the nose.

When a dog has been tracking game and it is not close to its owner at the time of poisoning, but has been found in a convulsive or comatose state, vomiting should not be provoked.

The owner should proceed to administer 1 - 2 doses of antidote (atropine), and then proceed to transport the dog to the nearest vet who will continue with the correct therapy.