



Protecting children and pets from cane toads

Management

If your pet mouths a cane toad, it is vital that you remove all trace of the poison from its teeth and gums. Flush your pet's mouth and face with lots of running water. Using a jet of water from a hose is an effective way of doing this. The water jet should be directed forward out of your pet's mouth, not down into its throat. Tilt the animal's head down so that you do not cause your pet to choke. Wash its eyes as well.

See your veterinarian urgently.

Prevention

Cane toads are a nocturnal menace. To prevent your pets being poisoned, place them in an area that you can keep free of cane toads and check your backyard at night for cane toads regularly.

Placing two or three bells on your dog's collar will alert you when your dog is 'suspiciously active', such as when it is chasing a toad or convulsing. Responding to this signal immediately may save your dog's life.

To keep your property toad-free:

- remove as much free-standing water as possible;
- cover swimming pools where appropriate;
- turn off as many outside lights at night as possible;
- maintain your fence to ensure there are no gaps and place gutter guards or a similar mesh under gates; and
- place cane toad traps around your backyard.

For more information and assistance contact:

For Kimberley residents and visitors please call:

Department of Environment and Conservation's
Kununurra office on (08) 9168 4200

Poisons Information Line 13 11 26

Kimberley Vet Centre on (08) 9169 1229

For all other areas of WA please call 1800 084 881

www.dec.wa.gov.au/canetoads



Cane toads secrete a toxin that can be poisonous to humans and animals. Cane toad toxin can cause severe symptoms in humans. It can also kill domestic dogs within 15 minutes of eating a toad.

This brochure provides information about managing symptoms caused by cane toad poison but does not replace the need to consult with your doctor, health care professional or veterinarian.



2009033-0109-4M



Department of Environment and Conservation

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Cane toads are poisonous at all stages of their life cycle, including as eggs and tadpoles. The venom is secreted and possibly squirted when the animal is roughly handled or feels threatened. To have an effect, the venom needs to be swallowed or absorbed through mucous membranes such as those of the eye, nose or mouth.

Treatment for people

When the toxin is squirted onto the skin or into the eyes, first aid should be immediately performed. Poisoning advice is available on 13 11 26 anywhere in Australia 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Useful information on first aid can also be found at the first aid page on the Queensland Poisons Information Centre's website at www.health.qld.gov.au.

Cane toad toxin can cause pain and severe irritation to the eyes and temporary visual disturbances, in adults and children. First aid treatment includes washing the eyes, mouth and nose with lots of water. Seek medical attention if symptoms persist.

If toxin is squirted into the mouth, immediately flush the mouth with water and take the patient to the emergency department of the nearest hospital. When swallowed, the toxin may affect the heart, blood pressure and breathing and cause paralysis, salivation, twitching and vomiting, with death being possible in severe cases through cardiac arrest, sometimes within 15 minutes.

Prevention

Ensure children are supervised in areas where cane toads are present and teach them the correct ways to handle toads, and the potential dangers, as early as possible.

To prevent coming in contact with cane toad toxin, protect the eyes where possible, wear gloves, and wash hands thoroughly after touching frogs or toads.

Warning: Cane toads can squirt poison up to two metres.

Treatment for pets

Cane toad poisonings occur when dogs and cats pick toads up in their mouths. Small dog breeds account for three-quarters of reported poisonings, with Jack Russell, silky and fox terriers the most represented.



Poison glands occur on the toad's shoulder. The poison is absorbed directly from the mouth of any animal picking up a toad into its blood stream and causes very rapid development of symptoms and sudden death in some cases. However, seeking veterinary assistance ensures that most dogs survive. A 2004 study of 90 cane toad-poisoned dogs in Queensland reported a survival rate of 96 per cent following veterinary intervention.

Symptoms and signs

After coming in contact with cane toad toxin, your pet may:

- drool or shake its head. Due to its corrosive and irritant nature, the poison will cause profuse salivation soon after your pet bites the toad. Following this, vomiting often occurs, especially in cats. Cats also show hindquarter weakness and adopt a fixed trance-like stare;
- experience severe muscle trembling and shaking, which occurs rapidly;
- stagger and appear to lack coordination;
- have difficulty breathing;
- have convulsions. If your dog is poisoned, it will usually suffer from seizures or convulsions. These convulsions are usually fatal unless you seek urgent veterinary attention. The poison can also affect the heart of dogs and cats, causing immediate cardiac arrest; and
- lapse into a coma and rapidly progress to death.



For more information about identifying native frogs, visit www.dec.wa.gov.au/canetoads