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Fatal Attraction – Antifreeze and Pets by **Jim Tsitanidis,** **K9 Trainer & Behavioural Consultant** **Spirit Ridge K9 Training & Rescue** www.spiritridge.net

Ethylene glycol, the main ingredient in almost all major antifreeze brands, has an inviting aroma, a sweet flavor – and a deadly after taste. Its appealing smell and taste often tempts animals and children to drink the highly poisonous substance. A large number of animals that ingest antifreeze do not recover. By some estimates, 10,000 companion animals die each year from antifreeze poisoning, making the toxin ethylene glycol a serious concern for pet guardians. Animals who are unlucky enough to stumble upon a leak, spill, or open container of antifreeze face an uphill battle to recovery. Whether it's a beloved pet, the neighbor's cat, or a wild animal, antifreeze can be deadly.

Race Against Time

Because it only takes a few tablespoons of highly toxic antifreeze to seriously jeopardize an animal's life, pet guardians need to know how to help keep the dangerous toxin in antifreeze away from animals, as well as detect the early symptoms of antifreeze poisoning. For pets exposed to antifreeze, the first few hours are critical. Animals who receive immediate veterinary care can recover successfully—but the longer they remain untreated, the less likely they are to survive. If antifreeze poisoning is suspected, pet guardians should immediately take their pet to their regular vet or to an emergency vet.

Antifreeze poisoning occurs in two phases. In the first phase, the animal typically appears lethargic, disorientated, uncoordinated and groggy. Symptoms usually appear thirty minutes to one hour after ingestion and can last for several hours.

The second phase, which can last up to three days, is characterized by symptoms such as vomiting, oral and gastric ulcers, kidney failure, coma and death.

Help Prevent Antifreeze Poisoning in Animals

1. Switch to a brand of antifreeze that contains propylene glycol instead of ethylene glycol.
2. Keep antifreeze sealed and away from animals; clean up spills completely, and fix any leaks immediately.
3. Don't allow your pet to wander unattended near driveways, roads, garages, or other places where she could come into contact with antifreeze.
4. Keep other products that contain ethylene glycol—like paint, cosmetics and novelty snow globes—out of the reach of animals, as well as any product of which you are not certain of the ingredients.
5. Monitor your pet for strange behavior. If you think she may have ingested antifreeze, take her to a veterinarian immediately.
6. To reduce the risk of poisoning, all brands of antifreeze should be handled carefully and treated as a highly poisonous substance