



Use of Chloride-Based Deicers Around Pets

Potential Effects of Over-exposure on Household Pets

Chloride-based deicers are used extensively around homes during the winter to remove ice and snow from areas where foot traffic is likely, such as on sidewalks and porch steps. Given the number of homes where pets, such as dogs and cats, are present, the potential exists for these valuable members of the family to be exposed to these products. This communication is meant to help the pet owner better understand the potential effects of an accidental over-exposure of a pet to these products.

Realistically, there are three ways a pet can come into contact with chloride-based deicers. They can walk on the solid particles or hydrated (liquid) product; they can consume the product either accidentally or intentionally; or the solid particles/dust may get into their eyes. Each of these scenarios is reviewed in the following paragraphs.

Skin and Footpad Contact

Chloride-based deicers present a low hazard to skin when used as directed, as brief contact is essentially nonirritating. Therefore, single short exposures to the solid particles most likely will not cause a problem to the feet of dogs or cats. However, prolonged (hours) or repeated contact may cause skin irritation, in some cases even a burn. Solid particles may become lodged between toes or caught in the fur surrounding the footpads, which would prolong contact and increase the potential for irritation. In addition, if the product has hydrated (becomes liquid), the salt solution may cause the footpads to become dry and cracked after prolonged contact.

Therefore, chloride-based deicers should be used carefully in areas where animals have routine access, or not at all in areas where prolonged contact could occur, such as in a kennel. Owners are advised to inspect and wash their pet's foot pads after any contact to remove any intact solid particles or salt solution. In the unlikely event that severe irritation is observed, a veterinarian should be consulted.

Consumption

With respect to exposure via consumption, most pets probably will not intentionally consume chloride-based deicers. However, it only makes sense to store the product in a manner that eliminates any opportunity for exploring pets to conduct a taste test. If incidental ingestion does occur, it is not likely to cause injury because the toxicity of this product is low. If a pet inadvertently consumes large amounts, gastrointestinal irritation or ulceration may occur. In this case, vomiting should not be induced, but if it occurs naturally, offer the animal plenty of drinking water and consult a veterinarian.

Eye Contact

To avoid potential eye contact, pet owners are advised to keep pets away when the product is being applied to surfaces. If the product does contact the eyes, some irritation can be expected. The product should be washed out of the eyes if such exposure does occur. If such measures are not taken, the prolonged contact in the eye may result in more extensive injury. A veterinarian should be consulted.

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