

# PETS AND PESTICIDE USE

## TOPIC FACT SHEET

NPIC fact sheets are designed to answer questions that are commonly asked by the general public about pesticides that are regulated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA). This document is intended to be educational in nature and helpful to consumers for making decisions about pesticide use.

### Can pesticides harm my pet?

Pesticides are used to control insects around the home, weeds in the yard, germs in the bathroom and rodents in the garage. Pet owners may also apply pesticide products directly to pets to control [fleas](#) and [ticks](#). While many pesticide products may be beneficial, poor planning or improper use of pesticides can harm pets.

Animals can be exposed to pesticides when they breathe in the product, absorb it through their skin, or ingest the product. Your pet's risk of developing a health problem depends on how much pesticide your pet is exposed to and the toxicity of the pesticide to that specific type of animal. Pet owners can minimize the chance of their pet having a problem by following [label directions](#), selecting lower toxicity pesticides, and minimizing the amount of exposure their pet has to the pesticide during and after the application.

### What precautions should I take when [using pesticides around pets](#)?

To minimize the risk of harm to your pet, remove pets from any areas that you plan to treat with pesticides before applying or mixing the product. Also remove pet toys, bedding, food and water bowls from the area. Keep pets away from treated areas for the amount of time specified on the pesticide label or until any sprayed pesticides have dried completely, whichever is longer. Finally, ensure all pesticides are securely stored in locations where pets cannot access them.



### What about using pesticides *indoors*?

During indoor pesticide applications, remove all pets from the home or keep them in untreated areas of the home. If you use foggers (bug bombs), always remove all animals from the house. Cover fish tanks to prevent liquid vapors or dusts from entering the tank. Since foggers create a fine aerosol mist, the pesticides may move through all of the air in the home, including the tank pumps and fish tank. You might also consider turning off central heating or air conditioning, which can circulate airborne pesticides. If any rodent or insect baits are used in your home, make sure they are in secure bait stations or in locations not accessible to pets. Baits are made with ingredients many pets find appetizing. In addition to the general precautions discussed above, ensuring the area is well ventilated during the drying process will help to minimize your pet's exposure when it returns.

### What about using pesticides *outside the home*?

Outside the home, the precautions are similar to those we've discussed for other areas. Remove pets, their toys and their food and water from the area to be treated. To minimize your pets exposure to the pesticide and to prevent residues from being tracked into homes, keep pets out of treated areas until the pesticide has dried completely. Granular products may have specific instructions for watering the granules into the soil after they are applied.

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### What about using pesticides *outside the home?* (cont'd)

Dissolving the granules by watering also helps to prevent granules from getting trapped in pet fur or eaten by birds. Since granular products require time for watering and time for the granules to dissolve, these products may require keeping the pets out of treated areas for 24 hours or longer. Check the label directions or call NPIC to determine how long to keep pets out of treated areas. Once the pesticides have dried, toxic residues can remain on the treated surfaces, so consider taking precautions to prevent your pet from licking, chewing or eating any plants or other items treated with pesticides even after they have dried.

Outdoor baits for gophers and other rodents as well as many slug and snail baits can be highly toxic to pets. Pets are attracted to the food ingredients in these products and pets have been known to eat them after they have been applied, dig them up when placed underground and chew stored product containers to eat the product.

### What precautions should I take when using pesticides on my pet?

Use care when applying pesticides directly to pets. Follow the label directions carefully, and be sure to use the correct amount of product for the animal being treated. Most topical formulations are applied according to the animal's weight. Use sprays, shampoos or topical products according to the label instructions. Never use more than the directions state as this can poison your pet.

Products labeled for use on "dogs only" should never be used on cats or other animals. Products designed for adult cats or dogs should never be used on kittens or puppies unless the label states that the product may be used on younger animals. If you have more than one pet, consider separating the animals after treatment to prevent one from licking or touching the pesticide applied to the other. Avoid petting and keep children away from treated pets until the product has dried.



Make sure you follow the precautions on the label for protecting yourself while applying pesticides to pets. Pets are prone to shaking, jumping and other behaviors that can lead to unwanted pesticide exposures. If you need advice on which product(s) to use on your pet, you might consider contacting a veterinarian for information. Some parasites can be controlled with pharmaceuticals rather than pesticides.

**Pet Poisoning:** Sometimes even careful use of a pesticide can cause harm to a sensitive, ill, or injured animal. If you suspect your pet has been exposed to a pesticide and you need assistance, call your veterinarian or NPIC (1-800-858-7378).

If your pet is having difficulty breathing, is bleeding, having tremors, seizures, convulsions, or is unconscious, contact a veterinarian or animal poison control center immediately. The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center can be contacted at **1-888-426-4435**. A consultation fee may apply.

As the agency responsible for regulating pesticide products, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) collects information about pesticide-related illness in humans and animals. Accurate information helps them determine whether additional regulations are needed. If you suspect that a pesticide made your pet sick, report the incident to the National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC), which operates under a cooperative agreement with EPA. If your veterinarian diagnosed pesticide illness in your pet, he or she is invited to report the incident in NPIC's [Veterinary Incident Reporting Portal](#).