

In wake of Japan tragedy, pet owners cautioned against giving potassium iodide to animals

March 18 2011

(PhysOrg.com) -- Pet owners anticipating the possible movement to the West Coast of radioactive material from Japan's damaged nuclear power plants should not give their dogs, cats or other pets potassium iodide tablets, cautions a UC Davis veterinary cancer researcher.

"At this point there is no risk to pets in California stemming from radiation released from the tragedy that continues to unfold in [Japan](#)," said Michael Kent, a faculty veterinarian who specializes in radiation cancer therapy.

He noted that UC Davis' William R. Pritchard Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital has been receiving dozens of phone calls daily this week from [pet owners](#) concerned about possible radiation health risks to their pets.

"While [potassium iodide](#) might help protect dogs, cats and other pets, as it would people, from the risks of radiation exposure in the unlikely event that radioactive iodine reaches here in appreciable levels, giving it ahead of time carries risks and would be ill advised," Kent said.

He cautioned that side effects for pets taking potassium iodide — especially if they consume too much — include severe allergic reactions; gastrointestinal upsets including vomiting, diarrhea and anorexia; decreased normal thyroid function; and damage to the heart. At high

enough levels, potassium iodide can even cause death.

His recommendations mirror a March 15 public advisory from the California Department of Public Health, which warned Californians to not take potassium iodide as a precautionary measure:

www.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/Default.aspx

Provided by UC Davis

Citation: In wake of Japan tragedy, pet owners cautioned against giving potassium iodide to animals (2011, March 18) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-03-japan-tragedy-pet-owners-cautioned.html>

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