Accidental dog poisoning on the rise: Rodenticides to blame

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(Phys.org)—Veterinarians at the University of California, Davis, warn pet owners to be careful about using rat poisons and similar compounds.

In recent weeks, veterinarians at the UC Davis William R. Pritchard Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital have seen a spike in accidental rodenticide poisonings. In the last two weeks of August alone, they diagnosed and treated six canine cases.

Ingesting rodenticides, which also include squirrel bait, can be fatal for a dog, causing death within a week if not treated. The veterinarians say that rodenticide poisoning has primarily been a canine issue, while cats are more likely to be attracted to plants that may be harmful to them.

"This is an all-too-common occurrence," said Karl Jandrey, an assistant professor of clinical small animal emergency and intensive care at UC Davis. "People are trying to get rid of unwanted rodents, but are not realizing what these toxins do to the other animals who share that environment."

Used to kill rats, mice and other undesirables, rodenticides contain ingredients that are anticoagulants, which slow the clotting of the blood. When dogs ingest these poisons, the active ingredients concentrate in the liver where they interfere with vitamin K storage and the production of blood clotting factors.

"In order to attract their intended victims, rodenticides are tasty to

critters," Jandrey said. "Unfortunately, that means they are also tasty to dogs, which see these poisons as treats."

At UC Davis' veterinary teaching hospital, dealing with accidental poisoning can require around-the-clock care with treatments in the intensive care unit that include replenishing blood clotting factors with fresh frozen plasma and replacing vitamin K. If administered early enough, this treatment usually leads to a full recovery.

One recently treated patient was Mocha, a year-old Belgian Malinois from Winters, Calif. Mocha had gotten into d-CON, a common rodenticide available at any hardware store.

Luckily, Mocha was brought to the veterinary teaching hospital in time. She responded well to treatment and was able to go home in two days.

"We are grateful for the care Mocha received at UC Davis," said Ken Shaw, Mocha's owner. "Like most dogs, Mocha is adventurous and likes to get into things she shouldn't. But after the treatment at UC Davis, she was home within a few days, happy and playful once again."

Provided by UC Davis