

Morris Hospital for Veterinary Services
26684 Grand River Redford, Mi 48240
Phone: 313 537-6100
Morrisvet.com
Dr. K. Morris

ANTIFREEZE POISONING

During those times of year when antifreeze (ethylene glycol) is added to or removed from the cooling system of cars, many cats and dogs are exposed to this very poisonous solution. Antifreeze has a sweet taste which attracts dogs and cats. Many pets will walk up to a container of recently removed antifreeze, or to an area where anti-freeze has spilled, and will drink it enthusiastically. If a 15-30 pound animal drinks (or cleans from its paws or fur) as little as ONE TEASPOON of antifreeze, and does not receive medical care within 4 hours, that pet will probably die within 2-4 days.

If a pet starts showing the signs of antifreeze toxicity, such as vomiting or diarrhea or stumbling or weakness, it is probably already too late to save that pet. The symptoms of antifreeze poisoning are similar to the signs of many other diseases, so it cannot be diagnosed by symptoms alone. A rather simple urine test can give us a SUGGESTION (not proof) that the pet has been exposed to antifreeze. If microscopic oxalate crystals are found in the urine and certain kidney blood tests are elevated, we can be suspicious that a pet has antifreeze toxicity. If the crystals are not found in the urine that does **not** prove that it isn't antifreeze poisoning. If a pet has ingested antifreeze and is already manifesting the symptoms, treatment is usually not suggested; but, since no guarantees can be made, we will either treat a pet or humanely euthanize it at the owner's request. If the owner elects treatment, and the pet shows no sign of improvement within 24-48 hours, we suggest to strongly consider euthanasia. The kidney failure caused by anti-freeze toxicity can be treated (not cured) only by kidney dialysis which is not available in veterinary hospitals (except in a few research facilities and teaching hospitals, like Michigan State University College of Veterinary Medicine).