



# PERMETHRIN TOXICITY IN CATS



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“ Veterinarians are seeing an ever increasing number of cats being accidentally poisoned by their good intentioned owners. Flea and tick preparations do have some chemicals in them that are non toxic to dogs yet may be fatal to cats. ”



## DON'T POISON YOUR CAT!

### Permethrin

This particular chemical is a “synthetic pyrethroid” drug used to kill insects. Permethrin is used in many spot on type products sold through vets, pet stores and supermarkets for using on dogs to kill fleas, ticks and lice. The natural occurring compound Pyrethrin made from an extract of certain flowers is less toxic and can be used on dogs and cats BUT the Permethrin made synthetically is toxic to cats. Permethrin is used in the dog products as it is longer lasting and more potent than the natural occurring substance.

The Permethrin is a very effective compound at breaking down cell membranes of insects and thus causing death. These chemicals have been used for years on dogs, horses and other animals but have been found to be toxic to cats.

Owners need to always read the product literature carefully to determine whether the product is safe to use on cats. Too often vets will have patients presented with overdose symptoms. This is happening more frequently now because people are purchasing some of their pet products on line and not receiving instructions on how to use the products by trained veterinary staff.



Typical toxicity cases occur when owners use Advantix, Exelpet, Tiguvon type spot on products, Permethrin rinse and various brands of tick collars. These products are usually labeled not for use in cats and often contain the active ingredient PERMETHRIN which is extremely toxic to cats.

When applied to the skin of the cat, it will cause spontaneous muscle contractions within 10 minutes that are seen as a shivering and shaking of the skin and coat, muscle fasciculations and tremors, eventual seizure activity, salivation and vomiting and without antidote treatment – death can occur.

Dogs do not have a reaction to the PERMETHRIN unless severely overdosed over a period of time. Cats have an immediate toxicity reaction to the standard dog doses and so should only ever be treated with “cat only” products.

Treatment for PERMETHRIN toxicity involves an antidote that settles the muscle tremors and seizures. Until recently the antidote was only available in tablet form as Robaxin. An injectable form has recently been released for trial. This is given intravenously to effect, so often needs to be topped up, meaning close observation is needed in hospital. Also intravenous fluids are needed and sedatives to calm the cat.



### **What to do if you accidentally apply a product to your cat containing Permethrin.**

Most cats treated will survive if treated early enough. Removal of the product is also needed to immediately reduce the amount of product absorbed into the cat's skin.

This can be done with water and a soap solution, then rinsed off.





## HOW DO I PROTECT MY CAT FROM TICKS?



Owners wishing to cover their cats for tick paralysis really only have one option that is registered for use. Frontline in the spray formula does give tick protection for up to 3 weeks. The problem with this is in its ease of application. Most cats will not sit still for a complete body soaking in the spray which is what is needed for it to be effective.

If spraying your cat is not possible you can still use of the top spot formula of Frontline in cats every 2 weeks, so that cats will get some protection. It is not a registered claim but on evidence of the effect on dogs we believe it will give some protection.

The best prevention is still daily checking of your cat and dog.

## IN SHORT

**ALWAYS READ THE PACKAGING, PURCHASE PRODUCTS FROM A VETERINARIAN AND ONLY USE DOG PRODUCTS ON DOGS.**