



PYRETHRIN TOXICITY

ABOUT THE DISEASE

Pyrethrin (natural) and **pyrethroid** (synthetic) insecticides are used in several different types of household and garden products, especially many flea-control products including aerosols, dusts, granules, sprays, collars, dips, shampoos, and once-a-month spot-on products.

Feline patients are highly sensitive to the effects of **pyrethrin** and **pyrethroids** and exhibit symptoms in as little as a few hours after exposure. The most common source for feline intoxication is when caregivers do not read packaging and place over-the-counter canine flea medication on feline patients.

Adverse reactions typically include:

- Excessive salivation (ptyalism)
- Restlessness, agitation
- Vomiting
- Incoordination (ataxia)
- Whole body tremors, sometimes full seizures

In long-standing tremor cases, patients may have severe elevations in body temperature which results in heat-stroke type symptoms and clinical decline.

OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

There are no specific tests for **pyrethrins** or **pyrethroids**.

A thorough clinical history and physical examination with a veterinarian often provides a strong presumptive diagnosis.

Please be sure to present any packaging material to the veterinarian or have it available for animal poison control (ASPCA) to help identify active ingredients.

Routine laboratory and urine testing are often performed to make sure no other underlying diseases are present or systemic changes resulting from heat-stroke.

TREATMENT

The treatment of choice is high-dose muscle relaxants to control tremors and seizure-like activity. If patients are truly exhibiting seizures, then anticonvulsants are administered, but generally are not strong enough to control tremors.

Other therapies are focused on decontaminating the patient through repeated bathing with dish soap and warm water. Care is taken to not accidentally cause hypothermia with the repeated bathing.

Patients are often hospitalized with IV (intravenous) fluid support to help with excretion of intoxicant, maintain blood pressure, and increase perfusion (blood flow to organs) in heat-stroke cases.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- NEVER USE CANINE FLEA/TICK PRODUCTS ON A FELINE PATIENT.
- Environmental insecticides should not be sprayed directly on animals or humans.
 - Please see the [Flea Allergy Dermatitis](#) document for additional information.