

TOAD POISONING

BUFO MARINUS (CANE TOAD)

This large toad is found in southern Florida and is seen most frequently during the warmer months of the year. It lives primarily on roaches, beetles and other large insects. Contrary to what is believed by some people, it does not attack any animal. Actually, it is rather sluggish, hopping only when bothered or when seeking new feeding grounds, usually in the early evenings. The fact that it hops toward some animal or person is coincidental. His poison is secreted in glands on the skin, which are located mostly around the eyes and on the top of the head, neck and shoulders. When he is attacked, these glands secrete a thick milky white toxin. It is considered highly unlikely that this toxin will penetrate the intact skin in sufficient amounts to cause problems. However, when a dog bites or licks the toad, the poison enters the dog's system rapidly through the mucous membranes of the mouth and the effects will be seen almost immediately.



SYMPTOMS: Degree of development of symptoms and severity of the general condition of the dog is dependent upon the amount of material absorbed. The basic symptoms are as follows:

1. **Profuse salivation (drooling) is seen immediately.**
2. **Constant head shaking occurs with the salivation.**
3. **Crying as if in pain may sometimes be noted.**
4. **Incoordination and staggering will occur in moderate intoxication.**
5. **Inability to stand or walk develops with more serious poisoning.**
6. **Convulsions occur in very serious cases.**
7. **Death can result in as little as 15 minutes in acute massive poisoning.**

There are several other substances that may affect dogs in a similar manner. Therefore, it is very important to know, if possible, whether it is likely that exposure to toads of the species has occurred just prior to the onset of symptoms.

FIRST AID: If you know or strongly suspect that your dog has been poisoned by a toad, *immediately* rinse the gums and flush out the mouth with a water using a soaked wash rag. Milk or other medicines commonly found in the home are not effective in first aid treatment of this condition. It is important to obtain the services of your Veterinarian to give specific antidotes by injection as soon as possible, especially when there is doubt about the severity of the poisoning. Remember, the smaller the dog, the greater the possibility of serious toxicity or death. ***NOTE:** Some dogs seem to become addicted to chasing these toads and will be poisoned several times in one "season".