



Information about antifreeze's toxicity to cats

Dear Sir or Madam,

As the leading feline welfare charity in the UK, Cats Protection has been seriously concerned by cat antifreeze poisonings for some time. Our charity helps more than 215,000 stray and unwanted cats every year through our national network of over 250 volunteer-run branches and 30 adoption centres.

You may have read the press reports about the tragic incidences of suspected cat antifreeze poisonings in your local area. We have written this letter for vets to pass on to their cat-owning clients to explain the facts about antifreeze and what you can do to protect your own and other local cats.

Antifreeze is lethal, swiftly and irreversibly toxic

Most antifreeze contains the active ingredient ethylene glycol (EG). EG is so toxic that even a teaspoonful is fatal to a cat. It is crucial to seek veterinary treatment immediately as affected cats are likely to die of kidney failure unless treated by a vet within two or three hours.

Signs of poisoning to look out for in a cat

- Nausea and vomiting
- Wobbly, uncoordinated or drunken-appearing gait or movement
- Twitching muscles, tremors and convulsions
- Short, rapid movements of the eyeball
- Sleepiness or depression
- Congestion or difficulty breathing
- Increased urination and increased thirst

We strongly advise avoiding publicity

The majority of feline poisonings are locally clustered which suggests that there is a high incidence of deliberate poisonings. Sadly some individuals wish to harm cats and copycat killings result from publicity of poisonings. We would therefore advise **against** publicising details of poisonings or attempting to warn the public about the risks of antifreeze by, for example, speaking to the local press, leafleting houses in the vicinity or putting up posters.

Reduce the risk of accidental poisonings

The risk of accidental poisonings can be reduced by treating antifreeze as a highly poisonous substance and taking various precautions. It's important to store antifreeze securely in clearly-

labelled, robust containers and to keep it well away from pets. It's vital to clear up spillages immediately, to avoid cats drinking or walking through puddles of the substance. If you suspect your car is leaking antifreeze, it's advisable to get the leak repaired as quickly as possible. As cats clean themselves fastidiously, they will do their best to lick antifreeze from their paws and fur.

Antifreeze should not be used in ponds and garden water features to stop them freezing as animals, including cats, may drink the water. When it comes to disposing of old antifreeze or containers, be sure to do so safely and responsibly and avoid pouring antifreeze down the drain. As antifreeze is classed as hazardous waste, your local council will have information about what they require you to do – this often means disposing of it at your local tip.

We wouldn't necessarily recommend keeping your cats inside but if you decide to temporarily restrict your cat's outdoor activity, you may like to visit Cats Protection's website and read the *Essential Guide: Indoor and outdoor cats* which outlines how to provide a cat-friendly interior home.

If you suspect deliberate feline poisonings

You can talk to the police and RSPCA if you suspect deliberate poisonings. Poisoning an animal is a criminal offence under the Animal Welfare Act (2006) in England and Wales and equivalent Acts in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Finally, should you have any concerns about your cat's health, do contact your local vet.

Yours faithfully,

**Cats Protection Advocacy Team
National Cat Centre
Haywards Heath**