Prevention of metaldehyde poisoning

- Store garden pesticides and products in their original containers, out of sight and out of reach of pets.
- Replace the tops of containers securely after use.
- Read the label carefully and use the product as directed.
- If your dog regularly eats things in the garden, do not use metaldehyde-containing slug pellets but try other means of slug and snail control.
- Choose plants for your garden that are less attractive to slugs and snails.

What to do if you think your pet has been poisoned

EMERGENCY ADVICE

- Remove your pet from the source of poison.
- Do not try to make your pet vomit – NEVER give salt water.
- Contact your veterinary surgeon for advice - do not delay seeking advice even if your pet is well. Your vet will ask for details of what has happened.
- Collect the poison and take a sample with you if you are advised to take your pet to the practice.
- Remember to protect yourself and others.

Contact details for your vet:

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Metaldehyde poisoning in dogs

The Veterinary Poisons Information Service (VPIS) is a 24-hour telephone emergency service for veterinary professionals providing information on the management of actual and suspected poisoning in animals.
Metaldehyde ingestion can result in tremors and convulsions. These effects can occur quickly after ingestion, often within a few hours. The convulsions can last for many hours.

The clinical signs of metaldehyde poisoning can include:

- Drooling
- Vomiting
- Wobbliness
- Diarrhoea (may be bluey-green)
- Panting
- Tremor
- Convulsions
- High body temperature

What are the signs of metaldehyde poisoning?

What is metaldehyde?

Metaldehyde is used to control garden snails and slugs, and is the active ingredient in many products. It is available in small blue-green pellets for scattering around plants.

Sources of metaldehyde

Dogs may be exposed to metaldehyde through access to the container or from eating the pellets from the garden. Most cases occur in the early summer when slugs and snails are common in the garden.

How is metaldehyde poisoning treated?

- If your dog has been exposed to metaldehyde – contact your vet immediately.
- If exposure was recent your vet may induce vomiting to remove some of the metaldehyde from the stomach before it is absorbed.
- Your vet will give drugs to control the tremors and convulsions. Metaldehyde-induced convulsions can be difficult to control and your vet may give sedatives or a general anaesthetic. These drugs may be needed for a number of hours (depending on the severity of poisoning).
- Cooling measures may be required to lower the body temperature.

Outcome of metaldehyde poisoning

Dogs can die from metaldehyde poisoning, but the prognosis of metaldehyde poisoning is good if treatment is started promptly and convulsions are controlled.

Dogs with complications from uncontrolled convulsions have a poor prognosis.