

# WARFARIN POISONING

(Information provided by courtesy of: ST. BETHLEHEM ANIMAL CLINIC | Dr. Ron Whitford, DVM | Clarksville, TN 37042)

Warfarin ("coumarin") is the poisonous chemical most often used is mouse and rat poisons. It is a potential fatal hazard for all mammals. Poisoning can occur from the consumption of large quantities at one time or the consumption of small quantities over a longer period of time. In recent years, manufacturers of these rodenticides have increased the potency of these products making them up to 200X more deadly.

Warfarin works by interfering with the blood's ability to clot by destroying the body's Vitamin K, which is required for blood clotting to occur.

Clinical signs do not develop until the damage has been done. Warfarin causes death by through internal bleeding in the rodents because the blood can no longer clot. Signs of warfarin poisoning are related to bleeding. Sometimes the onset is very sudden and the pet is simply found dead. In bleeding cases bleeding may occur in the chest leading to labored breathing. Nosebleeds, skin wounds that won't stop bleeding, vomiting blood, bleeding in the stools, swollen joints, and anemia etc. can be signs of warfarin poisoning. If bleeding occurs in the spinal cord, paralysis may result.

**TREATMENT.** The key is to TREAT THE PET AS SOON AS WARFARIN POISONING IS SUSPECTED. Pets that have had exposure to mouse and rat baits should be promptly examined and made to vomit to remove the potential poison before it can be absorbed from the stomach. Once the stomach has been evacuated, treatment depends on the likelihood of significant amounts of the poison into the bloodstream. Injections and oral administration of Vitamin K may be required for up to 60 days.

- [ ] Notify the clinic immediately if you see signs of bleeding.
- [ ] Keep the pet warm, dry, and quiet for \_\_\_\_\_ days (weeks).
- [ ] Give oral Vitamin K as directed: \_\_\_\_\_ tablets every \_\_\_\_\_ hours. It will be required for 4-6 weeks if significant ingestion has occurred.
- [ ] Return in \_\_\_\_\_(days) (weeks) for a recheck blood count and clotting time. Additional rechecks at weekly intervals are required for up to 6 weeks depending on the amount ingested.