Press release template: Pet poisons

You can tailor this press release using regional survey statistics and local details in order to promote your own practice and services to your local media.

Regional statistics showing the percentage of vets that have seen cases of toxic ingestion in pets are displayed at the end of this document.

Template

[Your practice name]

For immediate release

Contact: [Name of practice contact to deal with press enquiries, with phone number and email]

Poisons put [local area] pets in peril, as [regional statistic] of vets report cases

[Name of practice and location of practice eg. Nice Vets in Highbury, London,] today warned [local area] pet owners to guard against poisonous perils after the British Veterinary Association’s (BVA) Voice of the Veterinary Profession survey showed [regional statistic] of [region] companion animal vets had seen cases of toxic ingestion or other toxic incidents over the last year.

Across the UK, vets saw on average one cases of poisoning every month, with chocolate (89%), rat poison (78%) and grapes (60%) the most common poisons that vets had treated. Other poisons involved in the cases vets had seen included:

• Human non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as high-dose aspirin (57%)
• Antifreeze (47%)
• Lilies (43%)
• Slug pellets (41%)
• Accidental overdose of prescribed veterinary medicines (34%)
• Inappropriate application of permethrin (flea treatment) (30%)
• Paracetamol (26%)
• Adder bites (21%)
• Mouldy food (10%)
• Detergent (10%)
• Blue green algae (8%)
• Other medicines, such as antidepressants or nicotine products (9%)
• Recreational drugs (4%)

Other less common cases involved xylitol poisoning from chewing gum, poisoning from wild mushrooms and fungi, as well as horse worming products ingested by dogs.

[Name of practice and location of practice eg. Nice Vets in Highbury, London,] are joining forces with BVA and the Animal Welfare Foundation (AWF) to alert owners to the risks of poisons to pets and offer advice about how to protect pets and what to do if they suspect their animal has been poisoned. AWF’s ‘Pets and Poisons’ leaflet is now available to pick up from the surgery and on the practice’s website [delete as appropriate if available only in surgery OR on website].

[Name, job title,] from [practice name] said:

[Insert practice quote here, highlighting the message you really want to get across; maybe something like “Vets know that sometimes owners can take every precaution and accidents still happen. If an owner suspects their pet may have ingested or come into contact with any harmful substance they should contact us immediately on [contact number] for advice.”]

BVA President Gudrun Ravetz said:

“These findings from BVA’s Voice of the Veterinary Profession survey show how common incidents of pet poisoning are and underline that owners must be vigilant especially with prying pets. The top five poisoning cases seen by vets include foods that are not toxic to humans but which pose a significant risk to pets such as dogs, like chocolate and grapes, alongside other toxic substances such as rat poison and antifreeze. Owners can take steps to avoid both perils – keep human food away from and out of reach of pets and make sure other toxic substances and medicines are kept securely locked away in pet-proof containers and cupboards.”
For more information on pets and poisons download the Animal Welfare Foundation leaflet at http://www.bva-awf.org.uk/pet-care-advice/pets-and-poisons. If you have any doubts about whether or not your pet could have eaten something poisonous, [Nice Vets in Highbury] recommends contacting them immediately on [best contact number].

ENDS/

Notes for editors

1. [practice name] was set up by [founder’s name] [number of years since founding] years ago and is situated at [practice address]

2. BVA is the national representative body for the veterinary profession in the UK. We represent the views of our 16,000 members on animal health and welfare, and veterinary policy issues to government, parliamentarians and key influencers in the UK and EU.

3. BVA’s Voice of the Veterinary Profession survey (www.bva.co.uk/voice/) is a bi-annual survey of veterinary surgeons and veterinary students drawn from BVA members and carried out by the independent research company, Alpha Research www.alpharesearch.co.uk. The Voice of the Veterinary Profession captures the profession’s views and experiences by asking questions about animal health and welfare, public health, and trends in the veterinary profession. The panel is broadly representative of the BVA membership, which is largely in line with RCVS membership. These figures are taken from the Autumn 2015 survey, which was completed by 592 BVA members between 1 and 25 October 2015.

The survey asked companion animal vets: “Approximately how many cases of toxic ingestion or other toxic incidents have you seen in companion animals in the last 12 months?”

94% of companion animal vets across the UK had seen cases of toxic ingestion or other toxic incidents in the last 12 months, with 12 cases being seen by individual vets within the year on average (mean).

4. Substances which can be poisonous to pets include:
   - Chocolate and liquorice (common Christmas gifts)
• Raisins and sultanas (used in Christmas cake recipes)
• Certain nuts (especially peanuts and Macadamia nuts)
• Xylitol-sweetened foods
• Onions, avocados and grapes
• Alcohol
• Plants including lilies (and daffodils)
• Cleaning and DIY products such as white spirit and lubricating oils
• Car anti-freeze
• Human medicines

5. Substances with low toxicity that could cause drooling, vomiting or diarrhoea include:
• Blu-tack or other similar adhesives (used to put up decorations)
• Charcoal and coal
• Cut-flower and houseplant food
• Expanded polystyrene foam (used for large present packing)
• Holly, mistletoe and poinsettia (common Christmas plants/decorations)
• Matches
• Wax candles and crayons
• Silica gel (found in packaging)

6. The Animal Welfare Foundation (AWF) is BVA’s animal welfare charity committed to improving the welfare of all animals through science, education and debate: their Pets and Poisons leaflet can be downloaded at: http://www.bva-awf.org.uk/pet-care-advice/pets-and-poisons

7. The Veterinary Poisons Information Service (VPIS) provides 24-hour advice for veterinary professionals on the diagnosis and management of poisoned animals.

8. For more information please contact [practice contact details].
Voice of the Veterinary Profession: regional poison statistics for companion animal vets

The Voice of the Veterinary Profession Autumn 2015 asked companion animal vets: “In the companion animals that you treat, have you seen any cases of toxic ingestion or other toxic incidents in the last twelve months?”

On average across the UK, 94% of companion animal vets had seen cases of toxic ingestion or other toxic incidents in the last twelve months.

The regional results in England by percentage of vets that had seen cases of toxic ingestion or other toxic ingestion are as follows:

London 93%
East of England 95%
East Midlands 97%
West Midlands 90%
Yorkshire and the Humber 92%
North East 63%
North West 95%
South East 95%
South West 95%

The results in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are as follows:

Northern Ireland 100%
Scotland 96%
Wales 67%