

## Beware the magic of Mushrooms!

We all know that certain mushrooms can be poisonous and that we have to be very careful when foraging them for food that we pick those that are safe to eat. However probably not many of us think of what would happen to our dogs if they ate the same mushrooms! Poisonous mushrooms can be just as bad for dogs as they can be for humans and of course dogs may not understand that they may not be safe to eat. This is particularly true if you own a dog such as a Labrador Retriever that is prone to scavenging or eating things that they pick up on their walk! The Veterinary Poisons Information Service has recorded 30 dogs in the last 2 years suffering from mushroom poisoning of which 10 proved fatal.

The types of mushrooms that are safe for people to eat are generally not harmful to our pets, although they should not form part of its normal diet. So don't panic if you drop one from the shops on the floor and your dog steals it! Most wild mushrooms are harmless to dogs, and also not particularly palatable, so many dogs will avoid them. However the poisonous ones can look very similar to the harmless ones and even if you have a reference book identification can be difficult. Hence any wild mushroom should be considered as potentially poisonous to your dog if swallowed.

These wild mushrooms and other fungi are particularly common in wooded areas and marshy grasslands but can even be found in your garden! Some can be very small so could be accidentally swallowed when your dog is nibbling at grass as they occasionally do.

The symptoms of mushroom poisoning are very varied depending on the type swallowed and how many are eaten. However they could include tummy ache, sickness, diarrhoea, weakness, lethargy, jaundice, fits, excessive drooling, swaying when walking or even unconsciousness!

*Clitocybe dealbata*



This mushroom, known as the Ivory Funnel, is one of the most likely to cause poisoning in a dog.

If you know or think your dog has eaten wild mushrooms then it is important you contact your Veterinary Surgeon immediately even if it still seems well at the time. If possible, try and get a sample of the mushroom, to aid in the diagnosis and treatment, being careful to wear gloves when handling it. Your Veterinary Surgeon may wish to make your dog vomit, to remove any more poison from it's stomach, as well as putting it on a drip and running tests for organ damage. Further drugs may be needed depending on the symptoms shown.

If treatment is started quickly then the outlook is often good. However this can be affected by how many mushrooms were eaten, how poisonous they are and how fit the dog is.

Time is of the essence; you need to get your dog treated quickly so always contact your Veterinary Surgeon as soon as possible.

That way you are far more likely to get a happy outcome!

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## Fungi overview



Fungi are common and varied. Their fruiting bodies – mushroom, toadstool or fairy rings – appear in damp, warm-ish conditions often encountered during spring and autumn, and vary quite drastically in their toxicity depending on the species, with **some being edible whilst others can be lethally toxic**.

VPIS has seen over **30 serious cases of fungi poisoning** over the last two years, including **10 deaths** (6 fatal cases, 4 euthanised).

In a number of these cases the ingestion of multiple species is usually implicated, but their exact identity is often difficult to determine as this requires specialist knowledge.

In the serious cases of fungi poisoning presented to VPIS, **the most common species** were:

- [ *Clitocybe* spp – containing muscarine
- [ *Inocybe* spp – containing muscarine
- [ *Cortinarius* spp – containing orellanin
- [ *Amanita muscaria* – containing ibotenic acid and muscimol (pictured above)

***Clitocybe* fungi are responsible for the most deaths** in this series; indeed they are the ones we receive the most calls about.

Muscarine causes hypersalivation (saliva can be thick and ropey), lacrimation, constricted pupils, visual disturbance, increased peristalsis and abdominal tenderness, vomiting, watery diarrhoea. In severe cases clinical signs include bradycardia and collapse; furthermore, increases in bronchial secretions may cause respiratory

distress.

Although the month of January tends to be relatively quiet in terms of fungi poisoning (due to the cold and dry weather), beware of the 'flushes' of fungi in early spring!