# Veterinarians warn of rising pet poisonings from backyard mosquito sprays



The rise of backyard mosquito sprays has led to rising concerns from veterinarians about the hidden dangers these chemicals pose to pets. While these products are effective in keeping pesky mosquitoes at bay, they carry significant health risks for our furry companions. Veterinary professionals are sounding the alarm as reports of toxic exposure in pets continue to surge, with a staggering 40% increase in emergency visits related to pesticide exposure noted over the last two summers alone.

The most significant offender in these sprays is DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide), a widely used insect repellent. According to Dr. Rachel Morgan, a veterinary toxicologist at Central Animal Hospital, DEET has been linked to disturbing symptoms in dogs and cats, including vomiting, tremors, and seizures. This silent threat infiltrates pets' systems through everyday activities, such as walking on treated grass or licking their paws.

Particularly alarming is the susceptibility of cats to common mosquito repellents. Dr. James Chen, an emergency veterinarian, notes that permethrin, an ingredient frequently found in lawn sprays and even some dog-specific products, is exceedingly toxic to felines. "A cat walking through a treated lawn and then grooming itself can ingest enough permethrin to cause life-threatening neurological symptoms," he warns. Even residual permethrin on a dog’s fur can be transferred to a cat during routine interactions, exacerbating the risk.

Cat owners need to be especially vigilant for signs of exposure, which can include excessive drooling, vomiting, muscle tremors, and unusual lethargy. These symptoms are not just uncomfortable; they may often be mistaken for other illnesses, complicating the timely diagnosis and treatment of pesticide toxicity.

Although the dangers of DEET and permethrin have been well-documented, misconceptions abound regarding "natural" alternatives. Many pet owners mistakenly believe that products marketed as "natural," such as citronella or tea tree oil, are inherently safe for pets. However, essential oils can be highly toxic, particularly to cats. This misconception can further complicate the already challenging situation as owners seek safer means to protect their pets from summer pests.

To mitigate these risks, experts advocate for environmental management strategies. Dr. Maria Sanchez, a veterinary parasitologist, emphasizes the importance of creating a safe space for pets by eliminating standing water, using outdoor fans, and installing screens to keep insects at bay without resorting to chemical sprays. When environmental measures are insufficient, pet-approved repellent options exist, including cedar oil-based products, geraniol formulations, and physical barriers like safe mosquito nets. Consulting a veterinarian before using any mosquito repellents is always a prudent step.

Adding to the complexity, research indicates that pets on certain medications may experience heightened sensitivity to chemical toxins. Just as some human medications can amplify side effects, corresponding effects may occur in pets, making it vital for pet owners to stay informed about the interactions of their pets' medications with chemicals often present in mosquito repellents.

As summer beckons, ensuring a safe outdoor experience for pets demands vigilance and responsibility from their owners. By inspecting product labels, favouring pet-safe alternatives, and consulting veterinary professionals, pet owners can create a protective bubble that allows for enjoyable outdoor moments without compromising their pets' health. With thoughtful precautions, it is possible to enjoy a mosquito-free summer while safeguarding the well-being of your cherished companions.

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Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.journee-mondiale.com/en/the-backyard-mosquito-spray-thats-secretly-poisoning-pets-at-an-alarming-rate/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.aspcapro.org/resource/dont-deet-dog> - The ASPCA advises against using DEET-containing insect repellents on pets, as DEET can cause significant clinical signs in companion animals, including skin irritation, increased drooling, vomiting, tremors, difficulty walking, and increased agitation. Inhalation exposures may require steroids, bronchodilators, and oxygen. If a pet is sprayed in the eyes, ocular exposures warrant flushing of the eyes with a sterile saline product for at least 15 minutes.
3. <https://bluepearlvet.com/pet-blog/how-to-protect-your-pets-amid-mosquito-borne-virus-outbreak/> - BluePearl Pet Hospital highlights that cats are particularly vulnerable to common repellent ingredients like permethrin, found in many yard sprays and even some dog-specific products. Exposure can lead to severe neurological problems in cats, which may be misinterpreted as signs of rabies or Eastern Equine Encephalitis Virus (EEEV). The best way to avoid pyrethroid toxicity in cats is by reading labels and staying clear of products marked 'for dogs only'.
4. <https://www.zoetispetcare.com/blog/article/pet-safe-mosquito-repellents> - Zoetis Petcare emphasizes that pet owners should never apply mosquito repellents intended for humans on their pets. Some repellents claim to be safe for pets but can actually be harmful. Always consult your veterinarian before applying any commercial or DIY products. Additionally, repellents containing DEET should be avoided around pets, as exposure can lead to vomiting, diarrhea, tremors, seizures, and other symptoms.
5. <https://vetmeds.org/pet-poison-control-list/deet/> - The American College of Veterinary Pharmacists warns that DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide) is found in many over-the-counter insect repellents and can be toxic to animals, causing neurological complications. DEET can be absorbed through the skin, and these products should never be applied to pets. Signs and symptoms of toxicity include skin irritation, increased drooling, vomiting, tremors, difficulty walking, and increased agitation.
6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Permethrin> - Permethrin is an insecticide used in agriculture, industry, and for personal protection. It is known to be highly toxic to cats, fish, and aquatic species with long-lasting effects. In cats, exposure can lead to severe neurological symptoms, including tremors, seizures, and death. Permethrin is also toxic to aquatic organisms, leading to significant biomass decline and community composition shifts when exposed to concentrations as low as 500 ng/L.
7. <https://www.pesticidefreelawns.org/resources/mosquitos-and-insect-borne-diseases/publications/deet-and-permethrin-a-dangerous-combination> - Beyond Pesticides discusses the synergistic effects of DEET and permethrin, noting that exposure to both chemicals has played an important role in causing illnesses. When used alone, DEET can result in human and animal poisoning, including death. Permethrin toxicity can cause tremors, hyperactivity, ataxia, convulsions, and paralysis. The article emphasizes the need for caution when using these chemicals and the importance of understanding their combined effects.