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Raisins and Grapes Can Be Toxic

Essentially unheard of prior to 2001, raisin and grape toxicity seems to be recognized with increasing frequency. The American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) Poison Control Center has now documented over numerous cases of acute renal failure occurring due to ingestion of either grapes or raisins. Raisin toxicity also has been observed in a cat.

Neither the toxic principal nor the minimum toxic dose is known at this time. While the iron content in raisins had been suggested as the toxic principal, this does not appear to be the case. Pesticides, heavy metals and mycotoxins also have been considered, but do not appear to be significant factors. Based on 10 cases reported in a letter to the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association in 2002, the toxic dosage of raisins or grapes ingested ranged from 12 to 30 g (0.4 to 1 oz)/kg body weight. Raisins are more concentrated and will cause toxicity with less quantity being ingested.. In 2004, there were 140 cases reported with 50 developing symptoms and 7 of these dogs died.

Affected animals generally begin to vomit within 6 hours after ingesting the raisins. Following this, the dogs might lose their appetite, become lethargic, and may develop diarrhea. Renal failure became evident within 3 days. In the original report of 10 cases, half of the affected dogs died. With aggressive therapy for acute renal failure, the other 5 dogs survived. Three of the 4 cases in London died or were euthanized. Recommended treatment includes inducing vomiting and intravenous fluid therapy for at least 48 hours and aggressive therapy for acute renal failure.

All pet owners should be advised to avoid giving raisins or grapes to their pets as treats and to seek veterinary care if large quantities are ingested or if the pet appears ill.