

## Your Healthy Lawn Could Be Killing Your Pet

Your pets may be exposed to toxic dangers that you are not aware of. Every year, an estimated thousands of pets are injured or killed by lawn care chemicals. The sprays and powders that kill weeds and insects can also hurt your pet. Cats and dogs cannot read the "keep off" warning signs on freshly sprayed lawns. Pets lick up volumes of lawn care poisons while cleaning themselves. Owners often cannot connect the cause of illness to lawn care products. Though many deny the dangers of lawn care chemicals, we should keep in mind the old adage, "Let the consumer beware!" Millions of dollars are made on these products every year. Evidence is mounting to demonstrate the health threat that lawn care chemicals pose to both people and animals.

"Chemicals used on millions of lawns across America could cause cancer, birth defects, gene mutations and other maladies. One chemical, 2, 4-D, a component in the Vietnam War defoliant Agent Orange, is now used in about 1,500 lawn care products." - DETROIT FREE PRESS 4/18/89

"Urban and suburban residents are now subjected to more pesticide exposure than their rural counterparts." - MOTHER EARTH NEWS No. 123

"The National Cancer Institute found a link between 2,4-D and malignant lymphoma, a lethal and widespread form of Canine cancerÉalso linked to a higher risk of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in people." - US NEWS & WORLD REPORT 9/16/91

"Kids whose yards were treated with chemicals were four times as likely to be diagnosed later with soft-tissue sarcomas, malignant tumors of muscle and connective tissue." - USA TODAY

"600 geese died after eating a pesticide off a Long Island, New York golf course. And we know of at least one person who has died. - Navy Lieutenant George Prior couldn't figure out why he kept getting sick after playing golf. He didn't know that his country club sprayed the greens with a fungicide called Daconil." - "DANGER IN THE GRASS" 20/20 TV PROGRAM 7/10/8

The danger is real but we don't need to poison ourselves and our pets. There are alternative lawn care methods. If you hate dandelions and want a pure stand of grass, there are a few things you should do. You want to make your grass as healthy and competitive as possible. In the spring, fertilize with an organic fertilizer.

Organic fertilizers are superior to synthetic chemical fertilizers because they slowly feed your lawn and do not kill earthworms. Next, mow often and at the highest setting. You want your grass to be relatively tall to shade out new weeds. Finally, keep your lawn well watered, especially during dry spells. It is best to water during the morning because some diseases are promoted by soggy grass sitting wet all night. If you have undesirable weeds, get a weed popper and pop them out. It's a good excuse to be outside on beautiful days.

Another approach to a beautiful lawn is that of the old, English aristocrats: encourage an herbal lawn. To them, the best lawns were those with the largest variety of flowers. Yes, we can love those little Veronica flowers that come up in the spring, the violets, Stellaria, creeping ivy and even dandelions. The chemical companies want these plants dead because their products kill everything except grass. Dandelions once had excellent reputations due to their nutritional and medicinal qualities. One beautiful trick I've learned is to plant grape hyacinth bulbs throughout your lawn in fall. Grape hyacinth flowers at the same time as dandelions create a smashingly bright show of purple and yellow. This is nature's paintbrush at its finest.

Nature produces many wonderful creatures. You can love your lawn and have safe, healthy pets. This year don't endanger your dog or cat with lawn care chemicals. Learn from the accidental mistakes of others. Please don't poison your pets.

- Edwin McLeod

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