Prevention of paracetamol poisoning

- Never give your cat paracetamol.
- Always seek advice from your vet if you think your cat is in pain.
- Store medicines and products in their original containers, out of sight and out of reach of pets.
- Replace the tops of containers securely after use.
- If you have medicines in your handbag keep it out of reach of pets.

What to do if you think your pet has been poisoned

EMERGENCY ADVICE

- **Call Animal PoisonLine on 01202 509000 even if your pet is showing no signs to find out whether a trip to the vet is required.**
- **Remove your pet from the source of poison.**
- **Do not try to make your pet vomit – NEVER give salt water.**
- **Collect the poison and take a sample/ container with you if you are advised to take your pet to the vet practice.**

Animal POISONLine 24hr advice for owners

01202 509000

www.animalpoisonline.co.uk
24 hours a day (charges apply)

VETERINARY POISONS INFORMATION SERVICE

Animal PoisonLine is run by the VPIS, the UK's only animal poison centre, which has provided advice to vets on the management of poisoning in animals for over 25 years.

Animal POISONLine 24hr advice for owners

01202 509000

PARACETAMOL POISONING IN CATS

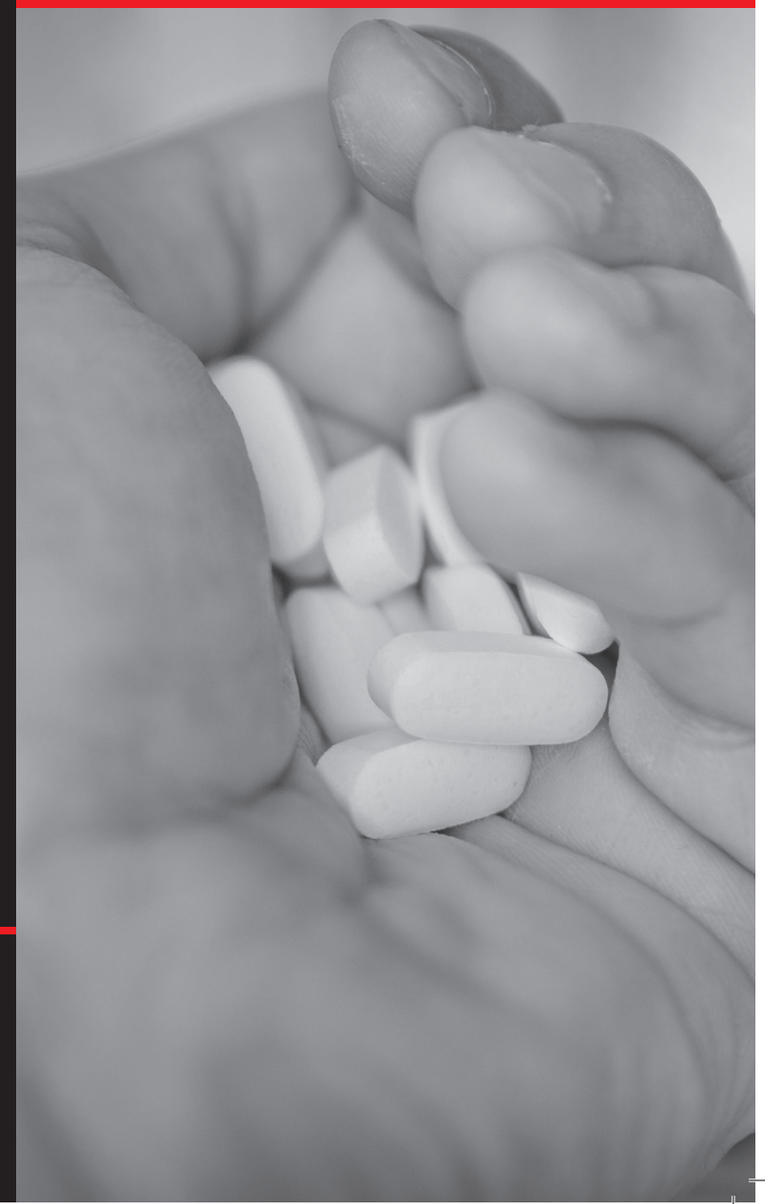

PHOTO BY DAVID PACEY - FLICKR

What is paracetamol?

Paracetamol is a commonly available painkiller. It is very safe in humans but cats are very sensitive to paracetamol as they are unable to metabolise it safely, resulting in the production of toxic compounds in the body. These have toxic effects on the blood and liver.

Sources of paracetamol

Paracetamol is available in tablets and capsules but is also a common ingredient in medicines for the relief of cold and flu symptoms. It is also available in syrups for children.

Many cases of paracetamol poisoning in cats occur because an owner has given their cat a whole or part of a tablet for the relief of pain without being aware of the risks.

What are the signs of paracetamol poisoning?

In cats the main effect of paracetamol is on the red blood cells where haemoglobin is changed to methaemoglobin. As a result the blood it less effective at carrying oxygen to the tissues of the body. If the cat survives this initial stage, liver injury may occur after several days.

The clinical signs of paracetamol poisoning, which will begin within the first few hours, can include:

- Panting
- Difficulty breathing
- Swollen face
- Discoloured gums
- Lethargy
- Distress
- Vomiting

what to do if your cat has eaten paracetamol

- If your cat has been exposed to paracetamol – contact your Animal PoisonLine immediately who will advise you if you need to take your cat to the vet.
- If your cat does need to see the vet they may prescribe the antidote, acetylcysteine, which may be given by mouth or through a vein. This will need to be continued for several days.
- Other specific treatments to protect the liver and reduce the methaemoglobin may be necessary.
- Your vet will also take blood samples to monitor for injury to your cat's red blood cells and liver.
- In severe cases a blood transfusion may be required.

Outcome of paracetamol poisoning

The effects of paracetamol poisoning can be dramatic and distressing. Prognosis is good if treatment is prompt and before the onset of signs.

Prognosis is poor in cats with severe breathing difficulties.