

Amitraz Toxicosis

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BASIC INFORMATION

Description

Amitraz is used to control ticks, mites, and lice on dogs. It is available as a dip (*Mitaban*) and a collar (*Preventic*) and is an ingredient in a topical preparation (*Promeris*).

Causes and Toxicity

Clinical signs may develop following labeled use of the topical products on pets or from ingestion of the collars. Amitraz should not be used on cats. In general, toy and small-breed dogs are more susceptible to the adverse effects of amitraz even with appropriate use.

Clinical Signs

Signs usually begin within 2-4 hours but can be delayed as long as 12 hours following exposure. Signs can include vomiting, sedation, disorientation, unsteady gait, decreased gut movement (motility), slow heart rate, coma, and seizures. In severe cases, death may occur. Amitraz may also increase blood glucose levels, so care must be taken when using it on dogs that are diabetic.

Diagnostic Tests

Diagnosis is based on a history of exposure and the presence of consistent clinical signs. Analysis of amitraz may be performed on urine, plasma, skin, blood, or stomach contents. Such analyses cannot be performed at the veterinary hospital or clinic but require the use of an outside laboratory. Laboratory and other tests may be recommended to rule out other conditions that cause similar clinical signs.

TREATMENT AND FOLLOW-UP

Treatment Options

For topical exposures following use of a dip or topical formulation, the animal is bathed in a liquid dish detergent. Dogs that have ingested a collar may benefit from induction of vomiting under the guidance of a veterinarian. In some cases, retrieval of collar fragments from the stomach or intestines through endoscopy (use of a flexible viewing scope passed into the stomach through the mouth) or surgery (abdominal incision) may be warranted.

Treatment is symptomatic for the patient exhibiting clinical signs. The veterinarian may use a reversal agent, such as yohimbine or atipamezole, to hasten recovery. Animals exhibiting clinical signs usually require hospitalization for treatment and supportive care, such as intravenous fluids and anticonvulsants. Close monitoring is also required until the animal recovers.

Follow-up Care

Sedation following amitraz dips usually lasts about 24 hours but can persist up to 72 hours. If amitraz poisoning is diagnosed quickly and reversal agents are administered, recovery can occur within 24 hours in many animals. Recovery may be prolonged (several days) if treatment is delayed or ingested material is not removed from the gut. No residual effects are expected following recovery.

Prognosis

Prognosis is good for animals receiving prompt treatment. Those with prolonged or severe signs have a guarded (uncertain) prognosis.