

Lawn Chemicals Linked to 2 Types of Cancer in Dogs

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Spring is here, Summer is just around the corner, and there is nothing as inviting as a lush green open space on a warm, sunny day. Play it safe so your pet can stay safe.

Often the most lush lawns and gardens in the neighborhood have been liberally treated with pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, and other chemicals that neither you nor your pet should be exposed to.

According to a study conducted over a 6 year period at the Foster Hospital for Small Animals at Tufts University's Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, exposure to lawn pesticides, specifically those applied by professional lawn

care companies, raised the risk of canine malignant lymphoma (CML) by as much as 70%

Dogs at highest risk for acquiring CML were over 50 pounds and living in homes where pesticides and herbicides were professionally applied, as well as homes where owners used lawn care products containing insect growth regulators, aka chemical killing agents.

Another study performed at the Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences at Purdue University concluded certain garden and lawn chemicals are linked to canine bladder cancer, including common herbicides containing 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4-D), 4-chloro-2-methylphenoxypropionic acid (MCPP) and/or dicamba.

The dogs' exposure to the chemicals occurred through ingestion, inhalation, and transdermally. Breeds with a genetic predisposition for bladder cancer, including Beagles, Scottish Terriers, Shetland Sheepdogs, West Highland White Terriers, and Wire Hair Fox Terriers are at particularly high risk.

The study showed that most of the dogs from homes using the chemicals had herbicides in their urine. Since some dogs from homes that did not use the products also had herbicides in their urine, researchers concluded the wind could carry the chemicals up to 50 ft from the site where they were applied.

We are just beginning to study the far-reaching harmful effects of the huge numbers of environmental chemicals that negatively impact all of our health.

Play it safe so your pet can stay safe

The veterinary experts recommend the following:

1. Do not apply chemical pesticides or herbicides to your yard, and if you use a lawn care service, do not allow them to use them. Also be aware

that a neighbor's lawn chemicals can potentially contaminate your property and pose a risk to your pet.

2. Avoid lawn care and other gardening products that contain insect growth regulators (IGRs). And be aware that the chemical pyriproxyfen, an IGR, is used in certain flea/tick spot-on treatments.
3. Do not allow your pet access to any lawn unless you can confirm no pesticides or herbicides have been used.
4. Increase the number of baths and foot rinses spring through fall, when chemical application is highest along public highways, parks, schools, streets and public nature preserves.
5. If you live in a townhouse or community that applies chemicals to common areas, detoxing a patch of grass in your backyard by watering the chemicals down into the soil to reduce skin contact after application.
6. Keep your pet on a leash and on the sidewalk until you have walked to your pesticide-free destination, and consider a periodic detoxification protocol for your pet.

Transitioning your lawn from fast food to an Organic diet

Espoma Co., a business that has been producing natural and Organic products for the lawn and garden industry for 80 years, created what they call their Safe Paws campaign to help educate people about natural gardening solutions that keep pets healthy and safe outside.

Espoma encourages homeowners to get their lawn off fast food and on "healthy food." The traditional method of lawn care spreads toxic pesticides over the entire lawn that are potentially harmful to pets, children, and the environment.

Synthetic fertilizers containing fast-acting chemicals and made with fossil fuels like Nat Gas and coal are another problem in conventional lawn care.

These chemicals can burn the grass and kill earthworms and beneficial organisms in the soil. Excess fertilizer can leach into nearby waterways, causing pollution and harmful algae blooms.

Espoma explains that the focus of Organic lawn care is to produce a healthy lawn and soil using natural Organic fertilizers like bio-charcoal aka Bio-Char.

An Organic lawn has grass roots grown deep into the soil, which makes them less vulnerable to drought, weeds, insects, disease, and other stressors.

Food and garden waste can enhance the quality of garden soil, but remember to keep compost in closed containers, because decomposing waste can make pets sick if ingested.

There are many excellent online resources about how to naturally control weeds and improve soil health without toxic chemicals, and in many communities Organic lawn care services are readily available.

Remember, play it safe so your pet can stay safe.

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