

Windsor Animal Hospital

WARFARIN (RAT BAIT) POISONING

A common hazard is the "rat bait" often put out to exterminate rats and mice. These poisons all work by inhibiting the blood clotting mechanisms within the body. Within 6 hours of ingestion, the poison begins to interfere with normal clotting, and 3-7 days later the victim begins to bleed uncontrollably into the lungs, abdomen, eyes, and skin. Death is slow and agonizing! The "rat baits" have different ingredients (i.e. warfarin, diphacinone, or brodifacum), but they all cause the same bleeding problems. This poison is quite potent and very little can be fatal. People are often misled into thinking the danger is past because the pet is fine after ingestion. Fatality occurs several days later.

Signs of warfarin-like poisoning:

- Bleeding into the skin (appears as large bruises).

- Coughing or sneezing blood (breathing difficulty and bloody froth can come from the mouth).

- Bloody urine or bloody stools.

- Florescent green (dye from the poison) in the pet's stool (feces).

If you suspect your pet has ingested "rat bait", don't wait until bleeding begins! Our lab has a blood test (PIVKA) we can run "if you're not sure". There is also an antidote made especially for this poisoning. The sooner it is begun, the safer for the patient. Treatment by *Windsor Animal Hospital* may consist of inducing vomiting, stomach pumping, or enemas to clear as much of the poison as possible. If your pet is in a bleeding crisis, bandaging, suturing, or transfusions may be necessary to stop the bleeding. In all cases, the antidote will be injected and followed up by oral medication for 7-21 days (depending on the type of poison ingested). With proper and timely treatment, chances for complete recovery are excellent.