

Various members of the Liliaceae genus including Easter lilies, tiger lilies, stargazer lilies, and many day lilies are deadly to cats. Therefore, it is probably best to consider all lilies dangerous to cats.

The principal toxin is unknown; but it is known that all parts of the plant are toxic. The exact amount needed to result in kidney damage is also unknown but ingestion of as little as one-half of a leaf has caused death. The toxin causes very rapid kidney failure (acute renal failure). Dogs are not affected by ingestion of lilies.

Initial signs include vomiting, poor appetite, and depression. Vomiting may subside after 12 hours. Within 24-72 hours of ingestion, kidney damage ensues. There is no antidote available so rapid induction of vomiting and aggressive intravenous fluid therapy within 6 hours of ingestion is important and has been shown to prevent kidney damage. Once kidney failure develops (simple blood tests by your veterinarian can determine this), the chance for recovery is very poor, even with hemodialysis. If a cat is so fortunate to survive the acute kidney failure, long standing (chronic) kidney failure is typical.

So as that ole' saying goes: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" is very true in this instance. If you have a cat, keep those lilies out of harms way and if you observe your cat chewing on a lily take the cat to your veterinarian immediately.

The OSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital is open to the public and provides 24 hour emergency service. If you have an emergency, call (405) 744-7000.

This column is provided by the faculty of the OSU Boren Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital. The large volume of questions does not allow us to directly respond to specific email questions so please watch for your answer in the column. Email your questions for the column to dvmoncall@postoffice.cvhs.okstate.edu and watch for your answer.

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