



WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU FIND AN ANIMAL THAT'S BEEN POISONED

Medical and legal action

1 WHAT KINDS OF POISONS ARE COMMONLY USED IN GREECE.

Various kind of poisons are used in Greece...from insecticides to drugs, except for strychnine, which is not on sale in Greece. Whatever the poison, the effect is the same; the animal that ingests it dies in incredible pain.

2 HOW DO YOU RECOGNIZE THAT AN ANIMAL HAS BEEN POISONED. HERE ARE THE SYMPTOMS.

Organo-phosphate poisoning (insecticides - liquid or powder) - salivating at the mouth, excessive tears, diarrhea, constriction of the pupil, muscle twitching, asthmatic breathing, trembling, convulsion and coma.

TREATMENT: Get the animal to a vet as soon as possible. To give the animal the best chance of surviving, however, you should learn to administer first aid.

1. Induce vomiting: give salt or baking soda dissolved in lukewarm water into the mouth (30/60cc solution). After vomiting, activated carbon tablets will delay absorption of poison, but they're hard to find in Greece.

WARNING - if animal shows signs of nervousness such as trembling, staggering or collapsing, do not attempt an emetic as it can cause inhalation pneumonia. Continue to the next step instead.

2. Give an injection of atropine (1 vial for a cat or small dog, 2 to 3 vials for larger dogs) - injected into the vein (absorbed most quickly), into the muscle (absorbed less quickly) or under the skin (slowest absorption).

Warfarin (Rat poison) - Sometimes, there will be no symptoms for 2 to 3 days. Then red/purple/dark blue patches appear on body or gums, a sign of internal bleeding. Gums will be very pale in colour. Warfarin damages the clotting mechanism and the animal can also haemorrhage from the nose, mouth, penis, vagina or rectum as well as internally.

TREATMENT: Konakion (Vitamin K) injection to help clot the blood, 5-20 mg, depending on size and weight of animal

3. IF THE ANIMAL HAS DIED, YOU CAN STILL DO SOMETHING!

Greek Law No. 1197 (1981): “Whoever kills, harasses or ill-treats animals covered by the present legislation, or abandons them is punishable by Article 8 of the penal code.”

Greek Law No. 2017 (1992) says: “No one should subject an animal to pointless pain, suffering or distress. No one should abandon a pet.”

Note: The new law reinforces the fact that it is against the law to kill a healthy cat or dog.

The implementation of the law lies with the Interior Ministry (i.e. the municipalities) and the Public Order Ministry (i.e. the police). You should, therefore, report the poisoning to the police and the mayor’s office. You do not need to know who poisoned these animals; file a report against unknown persons (minesi ep’agnostou). A toxicology report and vet’s statement can be used as evidence; insist that your report be put in the log book! You should also report this to your local vet and animal welfare group, with photographs when possible.

If you know who poisoned the animals, you can prosecute. The evidence needed:

a) statement from a witness, b) name and address of the poisoner, c) toxicology report of the cause of death from the University of Athens toxicology dept. Outside of Athens ask the police for the nearest officially recognized laboratory. A sample from the animal’s stomach can also be used instead of a report.

4 HOW TO AVOID ANIMALS BEING POISONED

*** Neuter your neighbourhood strays so that new victims are not born.**

*** Do not put puppies on the street; they will not survive; try to find homes for them.**

*** Neuter your own pets to prevent unwanted puppies and kittens being born; many abandoned animals come from homes. Who abandons them? Not the mother!**

* Protect your own animal. Animals have been poisoned inside their own yards or while on a walk.

*** Do not abandon your pet; it is against the law; it will not survive on the street; it will probably be poisoned.**

5 You can take action if you see someone putting down poison bait.

Try to find someone else to witness it with you. Gather the poisoned food and take to the toxicologist for analysis. Report this incident to the police within 24 hours. If you can, give the name and address of the poisoner. This case can go before a public prosecutor within 48 hours (aftoforo in Greek).

6 YOU CAN ALSO TAKE ACTION IF SOMEONE THREATENS TO POISON AN ANIMAL.

Report threat to the police.

It is helpful to have a witness (not related to you). Give the name and address of the person threatening (if known) and ask the police officer to visit him/her as a warning. If it is not your own pet but a stray that has been threatened, tell the police you are a member of an animal welfare group, that the animals are looked after, neutered and vaccinated and pose no threat to the neighbourhood. Insist that your report be recorded!

Report the threat to the mayor's office as well.

CASE STUDY: In Sept 2002, an anonymous person put up posters in Kavouri that stated: "Notice to the female animal lovers of the neighbourhood. Due to the fact that the situation is over the top, in the name of the law and for the protection of the public, if you do not collect your stray animals within three days, we are going to take the law into our own hands. Citizens of the neighbourhood."

The following action was taken: report to the police and the local mayor's office; visit to local hotels to inform them of the danger. The police said they would monitor the area. A notice was posted in the neighbourhood warning people about the threat and suggesting they take extra care with their dogs and children. Nine dogs had been poisoned a week before so this threat was taken very seriously. One dog was autopsied and the poison was identified as a liquid insecticide that dries to a clear crystal state and smells slightly sweet. Death is slow and agonizing.

7 BE PREPARED!

Carry a first aid kit with you: bottled water, package of salt, atropine and syringes and a copy of this brochure. Put these things in a plastic bag and in your purse and/or car. Talk to your vet about how to administer first aid and what amounts to give. It can save your pet's life.

Teach children that poisoning is a terrible crime. Let us try to stop people murdering animals.

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