



***Not for our Best Friends!
Lead in Dog Accessories***



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Introduction

Lead is a stunningly toxic metal. A long list of problems has been linked to lead exposure: lowered intelligence, behavior problems, cancer, strokes, high blood pressure, kidney problems, anemia, cavities, and delayed puberty.

While lead is a mineral that occurs naturally in our soils, people's activities have caused our exposure to lead to dramatically increase. Levels in our environment are about 1000 times what they were a few hundred years ago.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics lead is "a serious threat to children's health." The Academy reiterates what researchers and government agencies have concluded, "there is no 'safe' level of lead exposure." We know much less about lead's effects on pets, but there's no reason to expect it to be any less toxic for pets than it is for people. We shouldn't be finding this toxic metal in products that people and pets use every day.




In this report we identify lead-contaminated dog accessories that are likely to be used not only by pets but by both children and adults.


What We Did

We purchased dog accessories from major California retailers in May, 2008. We tested the toys and other items for lead. We used an X-ray fluorescence analyzer to test for lead. We sent some of the accessories to a commercial lab to verify our results.

Lead in Dog Accessories

Products with lead concentrations above the federal standard for lead in paint (600 parts per million)

 A silver metal whistle with a ring at the top, packaged in a clear plastic blister pack with a blue and green background. The text on the packaging reads "ASPEN PET SILENT DOG WHISTLE".	<p>Aristo Silent Whistle</p>	<p>Petco</p>
 A small metal ID tube with a ring, packaged in a clear plastic blister pack with a purple and yellow background. The text on the packaging reads "ASPEN PET ARISTO I.D. TUBE".	<p>Aristo ID tube</p>	<p>Petco</p>
 A red and white striped ball with a blue and green label that says "Fetcher Playball". The ball has a paw print design on it.	<p>Fetcher Playball</p>	<p>Petco</p>

	<p>Helichomper</p>	<p>Petco</p>
	<p>Top Paw Silent Whistle (large)</p>	<p>Petsmart</p>
	<p>Top Paw Silent Whistle (small)</p>	<p>Petsmart</p>

Not Good for Children

Lead has a profound ability to damage children's intellectual and behavioral development. Children who have been exposed to higher levels of lead score lower on IQ tests than children with less exposure. Children with higher exposures are also more impulsive and have shorter attention spans.

Recent research has documented that lead exposure causes significant problems for children as they grow and develop:

- Scientists at Duke University found that increased blood lead levels in toddlers (1 to 2 years old) were linked with lower test scores in fourth grade.
- A 2007 study led by a scientist at the Harvard School of Public Health found that lead exposure in children ages 5 to 10 was linked with lower scores on IQ tests, lower scores on standardized reading and math achievement tests, decreased attention, and memory problems.
- Recent research looked at children and teens ages 4 to 15 who participated in a national monitoring program at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. The study showed that lead exposure may be responsible for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in almost 300,000 children.
- University of Cincinnati researchers found that arrest rates of young adults (both for violent crimes and all arrests) were linked to the blood lead levels of these adults when they were children. Higher childhood lead exposure was associated with higher arrest rates.

Not Good for Adults Either

Lead also causes a wide spectrum of health problems in adults.

One significant disease caused by lead exposure is cancer. The International Agency for Research on Cancer, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Toxicology Program, have all identified lead as a cancer causing chemical.

Lead also reduces our ability to have healthy children. Two recent studies, one from the Taiwan Institute of Occupational Safety and Health and the other from Brown Medical School, showed that women with higher lead exposures were more likely to have infertility problems. A third study, led by a researcher from the Harvard School of Public Health, found that mothers with higher lead exposure during the first part of their pregnancies were more likely to have babies with slower mental development.

Because of these kinds of problems, the state of California has identified lead as a chemical that causes developmental toxicity.

Other important diseases are also linked to lead exposure. Researchers from Tulane University and Johns Hopkins University recently showed that low level lead exposures are linked to a greater risk of heart attacks and strokes. Other recent studies showed that lead exposure increases blood pressure problems, accelerates kidney failure in patients with chronic kidney disease and is linked to an increased risk of Lou Gehrig's disease.

What You Can Do

We found lead in two kinds of pet products: toys made out of vinyl and accessories made from plated (shiny) metal. We suggest that you avoid buying either of these kinds of pet products. If you have products like these at home that you and your pet like to use, you can test them for lead with inexpensive kits available at hardware and paint stores.

Tell the stores where you shop that you want lead-free and vinyl-free options.

During the past decade, the Center for Environmental Health has successfully negotiated agreements with manufacturers of other products that contain toxic chemicals. These agreements reduced the amount of toxic chemicals in children's medicines, wood play equipment, lunchboxes, jewelry, and candy. We used California's Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, commonly known as Proposition 65, to initiate these actions. We are taking the same action with the pet accessories with lead hazards.

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