

# SOUTH EAST COUNTRY VETS

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## RAT BAIT TOXICITY

Poisoning from rodenticides (mouse and rat bait) is one of the most common types of toxicities seen in the dog. These poisons are easy to obtain and used anywhere there might be rodents—in homes, garages, stables, farms and even parks or wildlife areas. A lot of products that are advertised as pet friendly are still TOXIC and tasty to our pets.

Rat Bait causes significant impairment in normal blood clotting resulting in increased bleeding that is usually internal. It does this by interfering with the body's store of vitamin K which is an essential vitamin required for clotting to occur. In cases of poisoning you would expect symptoms to be nearly immediate but in the case of rat bait poisoning, it takes several days to deplete vitamin K. After that, even the lightest of knocks and bumps can lead to life-threatening bleeds! Therefore, **rat bait does not produce signs for several days after the toxic dose has been consumed.**

### Symptoms:

Most of the time, external bleeding is not obvious and you only notice that your pet is weak and/or cold with pale gums. Sometimes bloody urine or stool is evident or bleeding from the nose or mouth may be seen. Signs of bleeding in more than one location are a good hint that there is a problem with blood clotting and appropriate testing and treatment can be started.

### Diagnosis:

A blood clotting tests is used to diagnose ratbait toxicity.

It takes 48-72 hours for the effects of rat bait to cause the changes in clotting times seen at the lab so if rat bait ingestion is known to have occurred recently, this test may be delayed for 48hours.

### Therapy:

If the patient has only just ingested the poison, they can be made to vomit it up and an adsorbent liquid (activated charcoal) can be used to prevent the poison from entering the patient's system. If there is doubt about whether rat bait has been eaten or if it was successfully vomited, then the antidote may be withheld until a blood test is taken in 48hours time to check whether or not further treatment is required.

If ratbait is known to have been ingested and there is concern regarding how much has been adsorbed or it is too late to get them to vomit it up, it is safest to start your pet on the antidote right away.

If there is evidence that the patient is bleeding, the antidote is obviously required. In severe cases, where there is significant bleeding, hospitalisation for IV fluids, oxygen support & possibly a blood transfusion may also be required.

***The antidote is simply vitamin K which can be given via injections &/or tablets.***



### **Information for Dogs Receiving Vitamin K Therapy:**

Give the prescribed dose of Vitamin K tablet to your dog every day.

**STRICT** rest for the first week or longer if recommended.

Ensure no further access to baits! Pets will not learn from their mistake, and quite often they acquire a taste for the bait once it has been consumed.

It can often take 2 or more weeks for rat bait to be excreted from the body (depending on what type of rat bait has been ingested) which is why a long course of antidote therapy is required.

Once the tablets are finished, a blood test is required to check their clotting factors are back to normal. When testing for rat bait toxicity the following protocol must be followed in order to get an accurate diagnostic test:

**A minimum of 48-72hours must pass between animal receiving Vitamin K therapy before a blood sample can be collected for testing.** Therefore, please make sure there is a 48 hour time lapse between last treatment and bringing your dog in for blood testing.

Why?

- Vitamin K therapy also prevents abnormal clotting times from being detected at the lab for up to 48 hours from last treatment (pilling or injection).

Things to watch out for during this 48 hour period

- Gums colour changing from pink to white
- Trouble breathing- increased effort, tummy moving abnormally
- Lameness in one more legs
- Blood in urine or faeces

If you notice any of the above bring animal into the clinic ASAP, and if you have vitamin K therapy give one treatment following bottles instructions and bring animal in ASAP.

If you have any more questions please don't hesitate to contact us.