

**For Immediate Release**

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Are Pets Being Poisoned with Ozempic?*Toxicology Experts Warn of Accidental Exposures*

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. (Jan. 15, 2025) – Administering your pet's medication can often be challenging, especially when it involves an injection. Since the introduction of Ozempic® and other semaglutide weight-loss medications, however, there have been multiple cases where a diabetic pet has been accidentally administered Ozempic rather than their prescribed insulin.

"If you're not paying close attention, Ozempic can be easily confused with insulin," said Renee Schmid, DVM, DABT, DABVT, a senior veterinary toxicologist and director of Veterinary Medicine at Pet Poison Helpline. "While some insulin for pets is administered using an autoinjector pen, most is administered using insulin syringes. Because of the explosion of weight-loss drugs like Ozempic, however, people have become very familiar with seeing the new autoinjector pens. Since people often store these medications together in the refrigerator, mixing up medications can easily happen and have dire consequences."

Take the case of a Siberian Husky from Oregon who was accidentally administered multiple doses of Ozempic rather than insulin by her pet sitter. When her owner returned home, the dog was lethargic and vomiting. She was taken to the veterinary hospital, where she was initially treated for hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) before the medical team realized that she had been given multiple doses of Ozempic by mistake. She remained hospitalized for two days to receive treatment for the hypoglycemia and provided supportive care. She fortunately made a full recovery.

In another case, Mario the cat was being taken care of by a family member while his owner was on holiday. When the owner returned home, the cat was nearly comatose. Earlier in the week, Mario was accidentally administered at least one, possibly more, doses of Ozempic instead of the intended insulin. When he arrived at the emergency clinic, he was severely hypoglycemic and dehydrated. After consultation between the hospital team and Pet

Poison Helpline, Mario was treated with dextrose to help correct the hypoglycemia, intravenous fluids and aggressive nursing care.

There is still a lot to learn about semaglutide's effects on animals. One-time exposures most commonly result in gastrointestinal upset. The cases mentioned here involved multiple exposures. That and the fact that these pets have diabetes and are normally on insulin, likely contributed to the severe effects seen with these exposures.

"Many people worry about leaving their pet when they go on vacation," Dr. Schmid explained. "If you're planning to leave your pet with a person who does not normally care for that particular pet, it is critical that you carefully go through all of your pet's medications with them, and thoroughly explain how they are administered. That includes any special food or treats. It is also ideal to move human medication out of sight, so it is not mistaken for the pet's medication."

Not all exposures are the result of accidental injections. Curious pets are particularly skilled at finding and chewing on things. For example, a New Mexico wolf hybrid named Akila chewed on an Ozempic pen and ingested some of its contents, resulting in a trip to the emergency room.

"Never leave any medications out where a pet or small child can find them," warned Dr. Schmid. "Also, keep all pet medications separate from your own as we have experienced many cases where a pet owner accidentally took their pet's medication, and vice versa."

Pet Poison Helpline created *Toxin Tails* to educate the veterinary community and pet lovers on the many types of poisoning dangers facing pets, both in and out of the home. All the pets highlighted in *Toxin Tails* have been successfully treated for the poisoning and fully recovered.

2024 Case of the Year Winner Announced

"We had some amazing *Toxin Tails* stories last year, but we're proud to announce that after our online voting the 2024 *Toxin Tails* case of the year is Skippy, the Jack Russell Terrier who nearly died after a scary skunk encounter," said Dr. Schmid. "Skippy and his human family will receive a basket of fun Pet Poison Helpline swag, and the hospital team that treated him will receive 10 free poisoning consultations and a lunch for their staff."

About Pet Poison Helpline

Pet Poison Helpline®, your trusted source for toxicology and pet health advice in times of potential emergency, is available 24 hours, seven days a week for pet owners and veterinary professionals who require assistance treating a potentially poisoned pet. Per incident and subscription service options are available. We are an independent, nationally recognized animal poison control center triple licensed by the Boards of Veterinary Medicine, Medicine and Pharmacy providing unmatched professional leadership and expertise. Our veterinarians and board-certified toxicologists provide treatment advice for all species, including dogs, cats, birds, small mammals, large animals and exotic species. As the most cost-effective option for animal poison control care, Pet Poison Helpline's fee of \$89 per incident includes follow-up consultations for the duration of the case. The company also offers pethelpline^(SM) and pethelplinePRO^(SM) subscription services directly to pet lovers. Based in Minneapolis, Pet Poison Helpline is available in North America by calling 800-213-6680. Additional information can be found online at www.petpoisonhelpline.com.

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