

The danger of lilies

The toxicity of lilies to cats has long been a concern to Cats Protection and the charity's Advocacy team are busy spreading awareness of the issue

Despite our continuing efforts with articles and postings, both on and off line, we regularly see very sad press reports of poisonings in cases where cat owners clearly loved their cats but were simply unaware of the dangers lilies pose to them.

Lilies are extremely poisonous to cats. The toxins can cause cats to go into kidney failure and this can be fatal. It is believed that all parts of the plant are poisonous. Cats can be affected after eating parts of the plant or simply by brushing past the flower and then grooming the pollen from the fur.

Most of the major retailers include some form of warning on their lily packaging but these are often in small print on the back of the lily label where they are less likely to be seen by a purchaser. The warnings on the labels are varied, for example, some refer *only* to lily pollen being toxic. It seems that despite the warnings many cat-owning purchasers are still not aware of lily toxicity.

Retail success

The Advocacy team has contacted leading supermarkets and Interflora to ask them to improve the wording on the labels of bunches of lilies that they sell. We suggested adopting the following wording: **'Caution: all parts of lilies are toxic to cats'**. We also asked retailers to position warnings on the front in a prominent place where they are most visible to purchasers.

We are pleased to report that Morrisons and Marks & Spencer have both placed prominent warnings on the front label of their bunches of lilies. Marks & Spencer have gone further and actually have two warnings on their label. We are continuing to work with other major retailers including Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose to improve the wording and positioning of their warnings. To date we have focused on lilies sold in shops but we will also be looking at the wording of online lily sales.

What can you do?

Ideally we'd suggest purchasing flowers other than lilies if cats are in the home. There are lots of other beautiful flowers to choose from.

Please spread the word among your friends and let them know how toxic lilies are to cats. You'd be surprised how many cat owners are simply unaware of the dangers of lilies.

We regularly warn people via social media who might be buying lilies so please share our postings with your friends. We want as many people as possible to know about lily toxicity so that, hopefully, fewer tragic accidents occur.

To find out more about common poisons visit the Veterinary Poisons Information Service at www.vpisuk.co.uk or take a look at our *Keep your cat safe* leaflet online here www.cats.org.uk/cat-care/care-leaflets/essential-guides or in paper format by calling 03000 12 12 12. ●



Marks and Spencer warn 'All parts of lilies can be toxic to cats and can be harmful to other pets.'



Morrisons warn 'Lilies are toxic to cats and can be harmful to other pets.'

You can contact our Advocacy team,
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 Speaking
up for cats

