

Man reports area pets poisoned

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LAS CRUCES - The Animal Cruelty Task Force of the Dona Ana County Sheriff's Office is asking pet owners to be vigilant after reports of a series of possible poisoning cases near Anthony, N.M., Sheriff's Office spokeswoman Kelly Jameson said Wednesday.

In the past week, two of Tom Talbot's beloved dogs have died and three other pets have been poisoned: his neighbor's cat, a dog now recovering at a veterinary emergency hospital in El Paso and another dog recovering at the veterinary emergency hospital in Las Cruces, he said.

Another case of dog poisoning - via rat poison tossed over a wall into a yard - has been reported about 11 miles south of his home, in Santa Teresa, but authorities haven't said if the cases are believed to be related.

Since the five dogs Talbot feeds don't stay full time in his yard, it's hard to say where they might have picked up the poison, he said in an email.

"It isn't typical, commonly sold rat poison that is affecting my animals, but something more acutely toxic," Talbot said. "The closest I could come to finding the chemical, based on symptoms on the Internet, came out something called sodium fluoroacetate. A chemical so toxic it should be banned, if it isn't already in our state, but indeed used as a rat poison."

Area animal advocacy groups are also hoping to offer a reward for information that leads to an arrest if the poisonings are determined to be intentional acts against area animals.

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What to do

The Animal Cruelty Task Force of the Doña Ana County Sheriff's Office and sheriff's veterinarian Dr. Patricia Feeser urge pet owners who suspect a pet may have been poisoned to take the following steps:

- Take your animal to a veterinarian immediately. Both Las Cruces and El Paso have emergency vet clinics with after-hours care.
- Inform the veterinary clinic you suspect poisoning so they can run appropriate laboratory tests and collect any evidence. Remember to tell the veterinarian you will allow them to release the information to law enforcement.
- Secure the area in which the animal was found so that no other animal is exposed to potential poison sources, including tainted food, treats, deceased rodents or vomit.
- Once the animal has been transported to the veterinary clinic, have the clinic preserve any vomit or suspicious material for subsequent delivery to law enforcement.
- Keep all copies of your pet's medical records available for review.

Pet owners should also contact Doña Ana County Animal Control at (575) 526-0795 to report all suspected poisoning cases.

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