



All That Glitters is Not Gold

February 2009

Jewelry Recalls

Remember all those recalls involving children's toys and jewelry? Children's jewelry drew significant attention. From 2004-2008 there were at least 42 recalls and a total of *100 million* pieces of lead tainted jewelry were pulled from store shelves. Most of these items were manufactured in China or India. These recalls included bracelet charms, beaded craft kits, and pearl like beaded necklaces.

What Do These Recalls Mean for Our Pets?

OK—sure-- jewelry and toy recalls were all over the news--but what does this have to do with our pets? Good question! Let's think about the connections.

First, hardly anyone (or is it nobody?) is inspecting jewelry intended for pets. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is dedicated to the protection of human children and there are still only 100 inspectors available nationally—not nearly enough to stay caught up on children's products. Besides, the CPSC clearly states that their mission is to protect human consumers only. <http://www.cpsc.gov/about/about.html>

Secondly, small children are especially vulnerable to heavy metals in jewelry because they:

- Explore the world with their mouths and fingers

- Weigh less than an adult, so a little lead goes a long way

- Are still growing and developing

- Have a tendency to swallow things-- just because they want to

Hmmm—sounds like a description of our wonderful dog, Rosa. By the way—did you know that lead tastes sweet? Researchers say lead tastes sugary and children like the taste. What about dogs?
coming <http://www.cpsc.gov/ABOUT/Cpsia/cpsia.HTML>

A Review: Lead is Bad!

Lead is bad because it is so heavy and stable. Our body has a tough time processing these dense elements so they accumulate in our soft tissue, organs, and bones. After enough has been absorbed a pet, child, or person may suffer neurological and organ damage, even death. Once in our bodies, heavy metals require special treatment for removal. (Additional information: Heavy Metals—What is all the Fuss About? <http://www.purrfectplay.com/newsletter-07-11.php>)

Clinical signs of lead poisoning include loss of appetite, abdominal pain, diarrhea and vomiting. If lead is the culprit these gastro-intestinal signs may be accompanied by neurological indicators, such as blindness, seizures, difficulty walking, tremors, or unusual behavior. If you are worried, your vet can do blood tests. These tests are still not commonly used but they are simple and not too expensive—just ask.

Safe Guards to Protect Your Pets

- Avoid inexpensive metal jewelry that feels heavy relative to its size

- Avoid metal jewelry that looks black when the paint is chipped off

- Be especially suspicious of any pet bling made in China or India

- Avoid fake pearls—they have been frequently found to contain lead

- Ask about materials—even locally crafted pet jewelry can be made with components that are not safe

- If your pet chews on its charms—think, question, and perhaps remove

Ask—Question---Challenge

It is important to reconsider what we have taken for granted. The last few years have shown pet guardians that terrible things can happen and there are currently few safe guards in place for our pets. We are pretty much on our own. Aside from buying expensive equipment and systematically testing all pet bling, using common sense and tracking children's jewelry recalls are our best bets. Yes, times have changed but we are better informed and more assertive. We now know to ask questions and to push the envelope. We know that if we don't ask, nobody else will.

For additional reading and to track down our source material visit these links:

http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/manufacturing/2007-09-05-lead-jewelry_N.htm

<http://blogs.consumerreports.org/safety/2008/07/jewelry-recall.html>

http://www.ceclp.org/content/kids_and_lead/index.cfm?pageId=156

<http://www.reuters.com/article/domesticNews/idUSTRE4AO7MX20081125>