

TOXIC TOADS



Big and ugly, Sonoran Desert Toads are just one group of toads you can find here in the southwest. They spend most of the year hiding underground. They take advantage of the monsoon rains to fill up on insects and reproduce. Normally these toads are silent except for the female toad. These toads are poisonous, and pose a danger to your pets. The amphibian's two parotoid glands are located behind the eardrum membranes and extend back over the animal's shoulders excreting a thick, gooey toxin which coats the skin. Their awkward hopping attracts dogs who, will mouth or swallow the toads. The toxin is rapidly absorbed through the gums. If your pet comes into contact with toads, the first sign you will see is profuse salivation or slobbering. Often followed by, dilated pupils, brick red gums, in-coordination and weakness. Sometimes they are hyper-excited. They race around and whine with a wide eyed stare. Rarely the signs progress to convulsions, coma and death. **The first thing to do is aggressively flush your pets mouth with a garden hose or a basting syringe pointing the water flow forwards so as not to drown them. It's important to gently rub the gums to loosen the gooey toxin. Take frequent pauses so that he can take a breath. If you have sufficiently rinsed his mouth out, you will see improvement over the next 10 minutes. If not, rinse again. Toad poisoning is an emergency and you should**

take your pet to your veterinarian. There is no antidote so treatment is supportive. Usually I flush their mouths out again and cool the often overheated pet down. Occasionally they need fluids and cardiovascular support. Minutes make a difference, don't take a wait and see attitude. Prevention: The toads usually come out after dark and after it rains. These are the times to watch out for them. One of my clients had a toad proof pen built. The floor is six inches of gravel on chicken wire that extends up the base of the surrounding fence. Toads tunnel under fences, so those barriers don't stop them. When I find one in my backyard I put them back out in the desert. You can use a plastic bag to pick them up. Although they are poisonous, they are a living being and they are an important part of nature's way of controlling insects.