

Cocoa Mulch Warning

By Cherie Weaver

The next time you're shopping for garden supplies, you may notice something called Cocoa Mulch. The good thing is that Cocoa Mulch smells like chocolate. The bad thing is that it can be dangerous to your pets. Veterinarians say that cats are less likely than dogs to eat the cocoa-scented mulch, but the product can (in extreme cases) be dangerous for both dogs and cats.

The problem ingredient in Cocoa Mulch is the same thing that makes your dog or cat sick if they eat chocolate—Theobromine

Theobromine is a chemical in cocoa that is much like the caffeine in coffee. Dogs don't metabolize it quickly so it is lethal to them in quantities of about 100 to 150 milligrams per pound of body weight. It is also found strongly in dark chocolate and baker's chocolate.

Cocoa Mulch is made by Hershey's from the shells of the cocoa. It is true that studies have shown that 50% of the dogs that ate Cocoa Mulch did suffer physical harm to a variety of degrees (depending on each individual dog). However, 98% of all dogs won't eat it.

Within twelve hours of ingestion of Cocoa Mulch, your pet may show one or all of the following symptoms:

- Agitation/Nervousness/Excitement/Trembling
- Vomiting/Diarrhea
- Excessive Thirst
- Excessive Urination (with higher levels of theobromine poisoning)
- Muscle Spasms
- Seizures

In some extreme cases, coma and death are possible.

Cocoa Mulch is sold at Home Depot, Foreman's Garden Supply, Target, and other Garden supply stores. For the best pet safety possible, you should avoid using Cocoa Mulch in areas of the yard where your pets will be.