

Enquiry for veterinarians about pets chemical poisoning April 2019

The enquiry about pets' chemical and alphachloralose poisoning cases was made in the spring of 2019. Questions of the enquiry are shown in appendix 1. The enquiry was directed only at veterinarians and the link to enquiry was shared to the members of Finnish Veterinary Association. There is about 500 veterinarian companies and 2700 vets (1600-1800 working in clinics) in Finland and about 83 % of them are member of Finnish Veterinary Association. A total of 63 veterinarians responded to the enquiry.

The first section asked about the chemical poisoning of pets in general. Poisoning cases caused by chocolate, xylitol or houseplants was excluded. These cases were assumed to be very common and out of the scope of the enquiry. Totally 79 % of answerer reported together 671 animal poisoning cases (526 dogs, 144 cats and 1 horse). The most common cause of poisoning was rodenticides (Figure 1). The alphachloralose was more common in cats whereas in dogs the most common cause was anticoagulant rodenticides. The "no information" class consists answers, which contained more than one type of chemicals for example "5 dogs, rodenticides, detergents and Medicines". In these cases, the exact number of each type of poisoning couldn't be determined. However, same main classes (rodenticides, detergents ...) were represented in answers.

1.1 The number of chemical poisoning cases

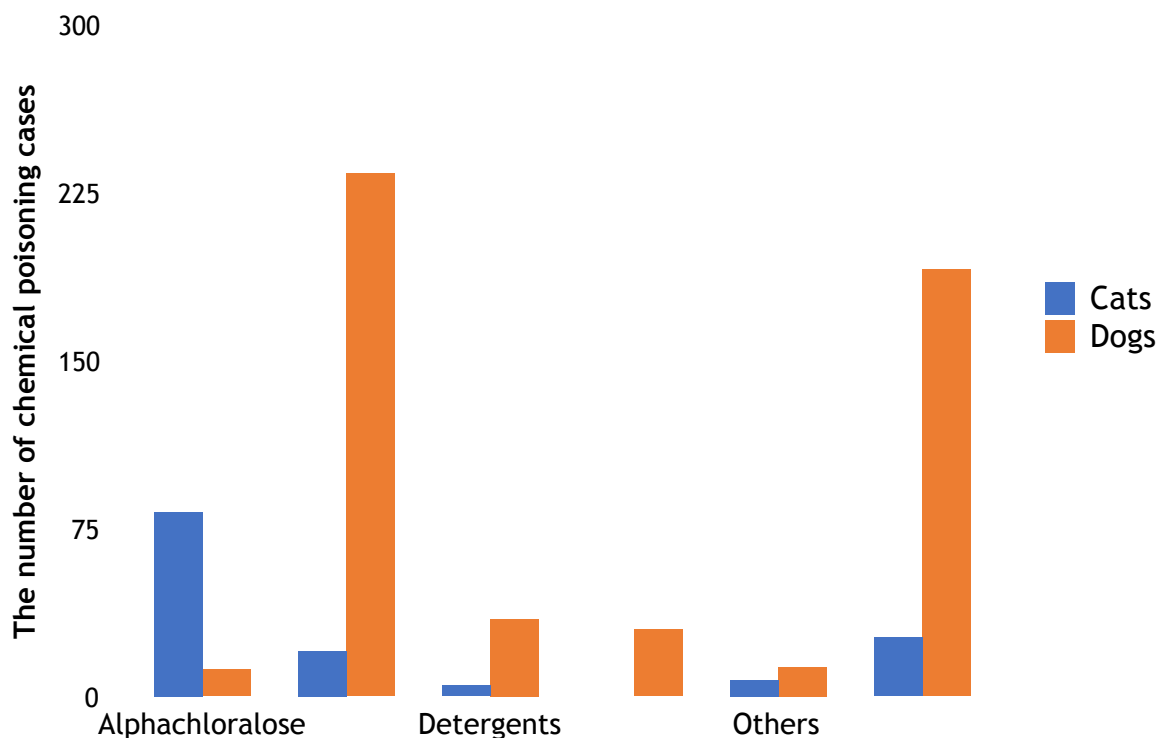


Figure 1. Total number of poisoning cases caused by different chemicals.

If poisoning cases are divided by the length of the reported examination period, it could be seen that the number of alpha-chloralose poisoning cases per year is higher than the number of anticoagulant poisoning cases (Figure 2). Based on the phrasing of questions, it is not possible to identify a number of cases in the specific year. However, it seems that the alpha-chloralose poisoning cases have become more common in recent years and most of the reported alpha-chloralose poisoning cases occurred between 2018 and 2019.

1.2 The number of chemical poisoning cases / year

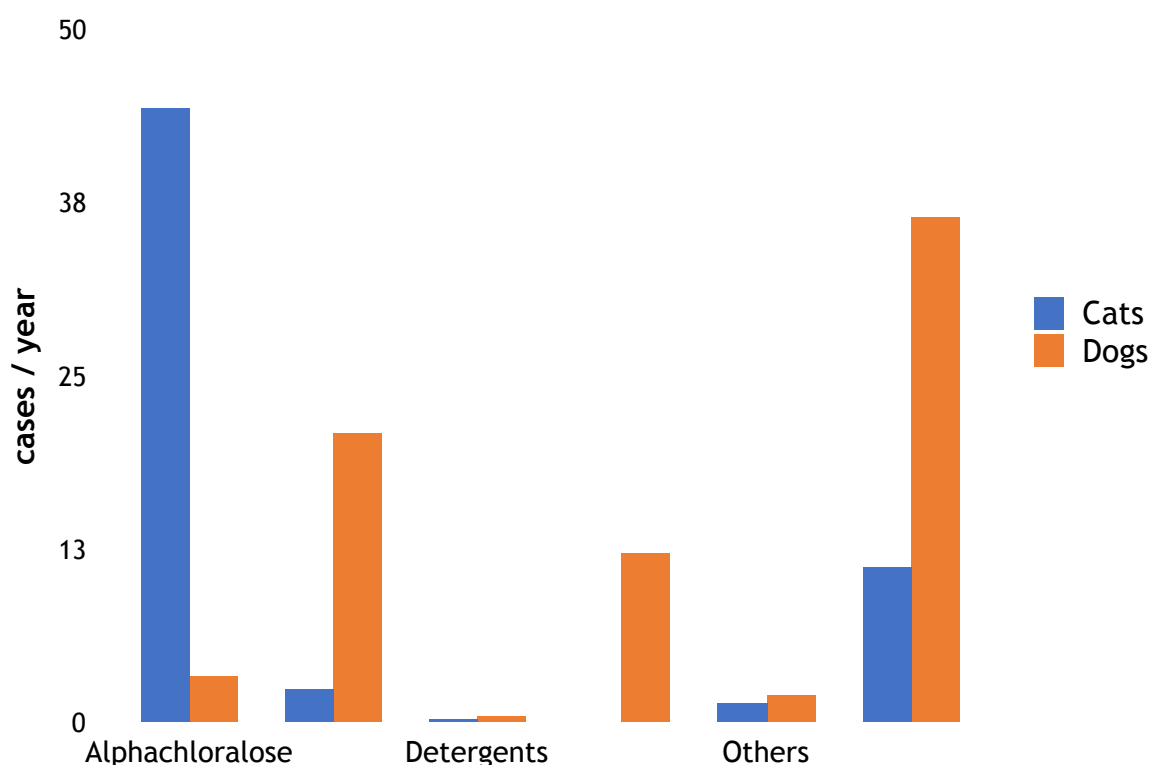


Figure 2. Number of poisoning cases per year.

All active substances in rodenticides with anticoagulation activity have been classified as toxic for reproduction category 1A or 1B. This classification applies to all products with active substance concentration of 0.003% or more. In February 2018 the sale of many products with anticoagulation activity were restricted to professional use only. Same time the use of alpha-chloralose products has begun more common. That could explain the perception that alpha-chloralose poisoning cases have become more common in recent years.

Veterinarians were asked to report the latest poisoning case. Most of vets reported alpha-chloralose poisoning of cat. Typically, the identification of the chemical was based on symptoms, but many times it was known that the owner of pet or the neighbour had used rodenticides, which contained alpha-chloralose. A typical case was a cat that moves

freely outside the building and walked unsteadily back to the home. Generally, it was unknown, how the animal had got the poison. However, many of vets suspected that the cat was exposed to alphachloralose by eating poisoned mice.

Totally 32 vets (51 %) reported alphachloralose poisoning cases. However, the enquiry was advertised e.g. in the alphachloralose poisoning article and the enquiry was probably more interesting for these vets who have had poisoning cases. Thus, it is also possible that the number of alphacloralose poisoning cases are over represented in the results.

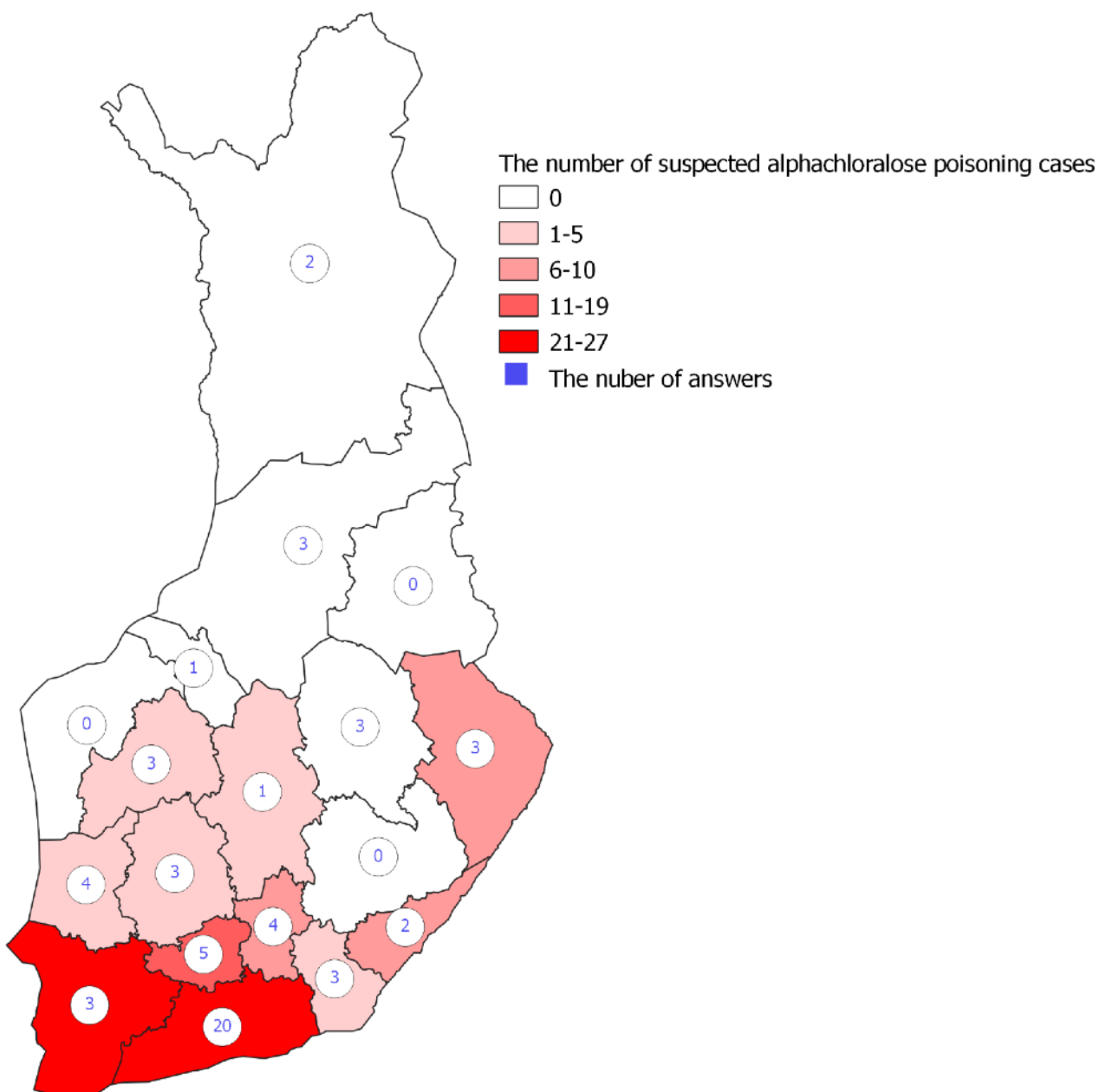


Figure 4. Regional distribution of suspected alphachloralose poisoning cases.

Appendix 1, questions of enquiry

1. Have you taken care of pets with suspected chemical poisoning? (Do not take account a poisoning caused by chocolate, xylitol or houseplants).

1.a How many poisoning cases have you handled during your career? Report species, number of cases, years and chemicals (for example 5 dogs, 2011-2017, alphachloralose).

Report the latest poisoning case:

1.b What animal had been poisoned?

1.c When the poisoning happened (year)?

1.d What chemical was suspected to cause poisoning? If possible, give the name of both the active substance (e.g. alphachloralose) and the product (e.g. Black Pearl Pasta).

1.f How and where was the animal exposed to the chemical?

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1.g Do you want to tell me more about this or any other case?

2. Have you taken care of cats or dogs with suspected alphachloralose poisoning?

2.a How many suspected poisoning cases have you had?

2.b How many of them died or were euthanized?

3. Do you feel it necessary that on the Tukes website would be a service where veterinarians can report animal poisoning cases?

4. Your working area (province or municipality)?