

While children pick up horse chestnuts ready for games of conkers, they should be reminded never to eat them as they are toxic. But are these seeds also poisonous to dogs?

ARE CONKERS POISONOUS TO DOGS?

Yes, conkers are poisonous to dogs if they are chewed or eaten. In fact, all parts of the horse chestnut plant are poisonous, including the leaves.

Horse chestnut trees and conkers contain a toxic chemical called aesculin which affects people and many animals, including dogs. There is no known antidote to counteract aesculin poisoning, meaning a vet can only give supportive treatment to help ease symptoms and give your dog the best chance of recovery.

Aesculin is a neurotoxin, meaning it damages the nerve tissues. If eaten in large quantities, aesculin can also be hemolytic, where it will rupture red blood cells.

Both are incredibly serious and will make your dog very sick, so veterinary treatment must be given to your dog urgently.

It is a small mercy that horse chestnuts are meant to taste bad, which means it is uncommon for a dog to ingest large amounts. However, it won't always stop a pooch from eating the conkers, and even ingesting a small amount can trigger serious illness.

Not only are conkers poisonous to dogs, but the nuts and the spiky shell can also cause damage and blockages in your dog's gut if they are ingested. They also pose a significant choking hazard.

If you suspect your dog has consumed conkers or any part of a horse chestnut tree you should contact your vet promptly for advice.

WHEN DO CONKERS FALL?

Horse Chestnut trees are common throughout the UK, particularly in parks and woodland. The nuts ripen throughout the summer and fall to the ground in autumn. Conkers usually fall from September onwards, however, if it has been a long hot summer, they can sometimes fall as early as August.

Spying the first ripe conker on the ground is an important marker in nature's calendar and is being recorded to help monitor the effects of climate change. This