

## **HORIZONS** - a resource guide to active & mature living

July 30, 2009



### **It's Raining Toads!**

It's monsoon season again and it's raining toads! Colorado River Toads (a.k.a. Sonoran Desert Toad) that is! The Colorado River Toad is a large, bumpy, brown amphibian that is a common nocturnal visitor to Tucsonan yards every monsoon season. Most of the year they live buried in the ground but as they are amphibians, they become active after it rains to eat and breed. The Colorado River Toad is very persistent when they are looking for a mate, so you may find a toad in your yard, despite wire fencing or wire mesh snake guards.

The Colorado River Toad has their place in the ecosystem because they ingest large quantities of bugs! Even though the toad keeps your yard free of bugs, they have glands in their skin that secrete a potentially deadly hallucinogenic neurotoxin when attacked by a predator.

Unfortunately, dogs and cats love to play with the toads since they just don't understand their toxic personality. If you see your pet mouthing or ingesting a toad, please watch for the following signs of intoxication: mouth irritation, bright red gums, excessive drooling, seizures, weakness, collapse, vomiting or diarrhea.

If your pet is observed playing with a Colorado River Toad, rapid intervention is the key. The first step is to wash your pet's mouth out thoroughly with water. Point your pet's head downward and rinse its mouth for approximately 10 to 15 minutes. A garden hose works well for your large dog, while the water sprayer on your kitchen sink works well for smaller dogs. Use a gentle water pressure and point the stream of water across the mouth. **DO NOT** point the water flow toward the back of your pet's mouth, as doing so may cause inhalation of water resulting in aspiration, pneumonia or drowning.

Once you have rinsed your pet's mouth thoroughly, seek immediate care at your primary care veterinarian's office or the emergency room at Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson. Further intervention such as IV fluids and medications may be needed to counteract the less common signs of poisoning, such as an irregular heart beat, seizures and shock. Immediate action by you and your veterinarian enables most pets to respond positively within one to two hours after treatment begins.

Tucson's summer desert holds many dangers. Your pet depends on you to keep him or her safe from heat, wildlife and swimming pools. Careful monitoring of your pet while outside can prevent many accidents from happening. However, when an accident does occur, Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson has doctors and nurses on-site, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson is located at 4909 N. La Cañada Drive in Tucson, Arizona. 520-795-9955 [www.vscot.com](http://www.vscot.com)