

Press Release

29th April 2010

IT'S NOT COOL FOR CATS... GO SMOKEFREE FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR PET

Many people are aware that second-hand smoke is harmful to their health but not many people are aware of the adverse health effects for their beloved pets. That is why ASH Wales along with the RSPCA want to raise awareness of the benefits of smokefree homes as part of the RSPCA's Campaign Week.

Living in a smoky home increases the risk of pets developing cancer, heart disease, respiratory problems such as chronic bronchitis, lung inflammation and asthma, and other illnesses.

There are over 4,000 chemicals including over 60 known cancer causing substances found in second-hand smoke that will be inhaled by your pet if you smoke in your home. Only 15% of cigarette smoke is actually inhaled by the smoker – the rest ends up in the air exposing your family and pets to the dangers of passive smoking.

Cats can be particularly susceptible to second-hand smoke because smoke particles get trapped in their fur and ingested when they groom themselves. Cats exposed to second-hand smoke have higher rates of mouth cancer and also feline lymphoma, a cancer that is fatal to 3 out of 4 cats with 12 months of developing it. Cats can also develop respiratory problems, lung inflammation, and asthma as a result of second-hand smoke. No joke for your feline friends!

For dogs the dangers are also evident. Dogs living in a smoky environment are susceptible to cancers of the nose and sinus area, particularly if they are a long nosed breed.

Birds can also react badly to second-hand smoke and may develop eye problems, as well as other respiratory problems like coughing and wheezing.

Elen de Lacy, Acting Chief Executive of ASH Wales, commented:

“People love their pets and don't realise the harm they could be causing them through second-hand smoke. The most important benefit pet owners can give their pet is the chance of a healthier and longer life by making their home and car smokefree. Making your home smokefree will protect your family and your pets from developing health problems from breathing in second hand smoke because when you smoke in the home, so does everyone else.”

Gethin Russell-Jones from RSPCA in Wales said:

“Studies, especially involving cats, suggest that there is a link between certain cancers and exposure to nicotine inhalation. Just like children, animals don't have a choice and we should think about how our actions can affect pets in the same way we should consider other members of the family.”

There are some easy ways to protect your pets by making your home and car smokefree:

- Always smoke outside. Set up a smoking area outside and ensure you, your family, friends and any visitors go outside to smoke. Opening a window won't eliminate the toxins in cigarettes from your home.
- Keep ashtrays clean and out of reach of pets - don't leave cigarette butts around which can be deadly.
- Let smokers have a cigarette before you set off, and on longer journeys take smoking breaks to stop the temptation of lighting up inside the car.
- Consider quitting smoking - the health benefits for you and your pet will be significant

NOTES

Please refer all press enquiries to: Carole Jones, ASH Wales at carole@ashwales.co.uk or Tel 02920641101 or 07593538076

ASH Wales is the only voluntary organisation in Wales with the sole task of tackling the ill health caused by tobacco use. Our main aim is to achieve a reduction in, and eventual elimination of, the health problems associated with tobacco use. Further information can be found at: www.ashwales.co.uk.

ASH Wales was established in 1976 as a branch of ASH UK. In 2007 ASH Wales became an independent company limited by guarantee and a charity registered in Wales.