

August. 9, 2006

Guidance for parents on recent recall of children's toys containing lead.

What toys are involved in this recall?

The Indiana State Health Department issued a consumer health alert on August 4, 2006 after testing found that animal toys given away by libraries participating in a national summer reading program contained unsafe levels of lead. Staff from the Deschutes Public Library became aware of the alert on August 7th and notified the DHS Public Health Division. Oregon public health officials and local libraries are alerting families that these bendable toys given to children as summer reading program incentives pose a potential health hazard.

What do the toys look like?

The toys are bendable dogs and cats in assorted styles and are about 4 inches long. See photo below.



Where were these toys available?

At least 25 libraries across Oregon purchased these toys from Highsmith, a company that supplies incentives, prizes and other materials to libraries. Libraries gave the bendable animal toys away as a reading incentive for "Paws, Claws, Scales and Tales", a summer reading program. A list of libraries that ordered these items, as well as information about the DHS lead-poisoning prevention program, is available on the public health web site at www.healthoregon.org/lead. The bendable dog and cat toys are also available from several other toy distributors.

How much lead was found in the toys?

Tests conducted by the Indiana Department of Health found the toys contained .4 and .24 percent lead. The maximum federal allowable level for lead in toys is .06 percent. The toy distributor had previously tested the product and found the bendable toys to be in compliance with federal regulations. The toy distributor and the Indiana Health Department are currently performing more testing of these products.

Can these toys harm my child?

These toys are a potential health hazard and children should not be handling them. Since the toys are small, children may put them in their mouths, suck or chew on them. Handling lead-containing objects and then putting their hands in their mouths can also expose children to lead. If a parent has seen their child chewing or sucking on one of the toys, they should contact their health care provider and consider a blood lead test. Parents should also carefully check their child's environment for other possible sources of lead such as lead paint dust, soil, pottery or lead dust from parent's workplaces and hobbies.

How does exposure to lead harm a child?

Young children are more at risk for exposure to lead because children explore their environment by putting their toys, hands and other objects in their mouths. Lead can interfere with normal brain development, resulting in permanently reduced IQ and behavioral problems. Even small amounts of lead can be harmful. Exposure to lead paint dust from older homes is the most common cause of lead poisoning and nearly half of all investigations for Oregon childhood lead poisoning found that recent remodeling or repainting was the likely source of exposure.

What should I do if we have some of these toys?

Families who received these toys should take them back to their local library. Parents can also dispose of them in the household trash. Family members should wash their hands after handling these toys. If a parent has seen their child chewing or sucking on one of the toys, they should contact their health care provider and consider a blood lead test.

Who can I contact for more information about this health alert?

For more information on this health alert call the DHS Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at 971-673-0440 or visit our website at www.healthoregon.org/lead.

Who can I contact for more information about lead and how to protect my family from lead poisoning?

The Oregon LeadLine, (800) 368-5060, is a free telephone information service for parents and others who are concerned about lead and want to know more about preventing lead poisoning. You can also contact the Oregon Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at 971-673-0440 or visit our website at www.healthoregon.org/lead.

Oregon Lead Poisoning Prevention Program

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