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# Plants and zootoxins: Toxico-epidemiological investigation in domestic animals

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## 1 Plants and zootoxins: toxico-epidemiological investigation in domestic animals 2 Alessia Bertero<sup>a</sup>, Franca Davanzo<sup>b</sup>, Marina Rivolta<sup>b</sup>, Cristina Cortinovis<sup>c</sup>, Anita Vasquez<sup>d</sup>, 3 Angelo Le Mura<sup>d</sup>, Asja Masuelli<sup>a</sup>, Francesca Caloni<sup>a,\*</sup> 4 5 6 <sup>a</sup> Department of Environmental Science and Policy (ESP), Università degli Studi di Milano, Via 7 Celoria 10, 20133 Milan, Italy; 8 <sup>b</sup> Milan Poison Control Centre, ASST Grande Ospedale Metropolitano Niguarda, Piazza 9 dell'Ospedale Maggiore 3, 20162 Milan, Italy; 10 <sup>c</sup> Department of Health, Animal Science and Food Safety (VESPA), Università degli Studi di 11 Milano, Via Celoria 10, 20133 Milan, Italy; 12 <sup>d</sup> Department of Veterinary Medicine (DIMEVET), Università Degli Studi di Milano, Via 13 Celoria 10, 20133 Milan. 14 15 \* Corresponding author. E-mail address: francesca.caloni@unimi.it 16 17 **Abstract** 18 An epidemiological study on animal poisoning due to plants and zootoxins has been carried 19 out by the Poison Control Centre of Milan (CAV) in collaboration with the University of 20 Milan (Italy). During the period January 2015 - March 2019, the CAV received 932 calls on 21 animal poisonings, 12.66% (n = 118) of which were related to plants and zootoxins. Among 22 these, 95 enquiries (80.51%) concerned exposures to plants and 23 (19.49%) to zootoxins. 23 The dog was the species most frequently involved (67.80% of the calls, n = 80), followed by 24 the cat (26.27%, n = 31). As for the plants, several poisoning episodes were related to 25 glycoside-, alkaloid-, oxalate- and diterpenoid-containing species. Cycas revoluta, Euphorbia 26 pulcherrima and Hydrangea macrophylla were the most often reported plants. The outcome 27 has been reported for half of the episodes (51.58%, n = 49) and it was fatal for 3 animals (6.12%). 28 29 Regarding the zootoxins, the majority of the enquiries were related to viper (Vipera aspis), 30 but exposures to pine processionary (Thaumetopoea pityocampa), common toad (Bufo 31 bufo), salamander (Salamandra salamandra), and jellyfish (phylum Cnidaria) were also

reported. The outcome was known in 65.22% of the cases with just one fatal episode.

33	This epidemiological investigation depicts an interesting overview on the issue of plant and
34	zootoxin exposures in domestic animals, highlighting the relevance of these agents as
35	causes of animal poisoning and providing useful information for prevention and diagnosis.
36	
37	Keywords (max 6): domestic animals; exposure; plants; zootoxins; toxico-epidemiology
38	
39	1. Introduction
40	In Europe, even if the number of toxic plants, containing phytotoxins belonging to different
41	chemical classes (i.e. alkaloids, glycosides, proteins, etc.)(Welch, 2019), is not comparable to
42	that of the American and African continent, dangerous species are not lacking (Anadón et
43	al., 2018), and neither are zootoxins, produced by poisonous/venomous animals for food
44	procurement and as a defense technique (Gwaltney-Brant et al., 2018).
45	Thus, domestic animal poisoning due to the exposure to plants and zootoxins is not a rare
46	occurrence but a recognized and well-documented issue of great interest for its scientific
47	significance and animal health impact (Anadón et al., 2018; Caloni et al., 2018; Gwaltney-
48	Brant et al., 2018).
49	Even more than 10% of the calls on animal poisoning received by European poison centers
50	are related to plant exposures (Barbier, 2005; Campbell, 1998; Cortinovis and Caloni, 2013;
51	Keck et al., 2004; McFarland et al., 2017), while zootoxins are generally responsible for a
52	lower (2-5%) but not negligible number of cases (Barbier, 2005; Caloni et al., 2012; Lassak,
53	2005). Moreover, new toxico-epidemiological trends in plant and zootoxin poisonings are
54	likely to surface, facilitated by the current global trade in ornamental plants and exotic pets
55	(Elwin et al., 2020; Schaper et al., 2019) and the ongoing climate change that may influence
56	the geographical distribution of poisonous/venomous terrestrial and aquatic animal species
57	(Needleman et al., 2018a; Needleman et al., 2018b).
58	The aim of the paper is to depict an insight on plant and zootoxin exposures in domestic
59	animals, providing data regarding the causative agents, incidences and emerging trends,

species involved, route of exposure, clinical presentation and outcome.

## 2. Material and methods

The Poison Control Center of Milan (CAV), which has been operating since 1967, deals with 63 64 and analyses cases on suspect animal poisonings and since 1990, collaborates with 65 toxicologists of the University of Milan (Caloni et al., 2012). 66 After each toxicological consultation, the normal procedure requires to fill in a form, 67 specifically intended for the data collection, with information on the species/breed, suspected poisoning agent, route of exposure and clinical signs. These data are stored in a 68 69 database that is continuously updated, also by means of follow-up calls to determine the 70 final outcome. 71 All the cases of suspected animal poisoning collected by CAV from January 2015 to March 72 2019 have been reviewed in order to select the episodes related to plant and zootoxin 73 exposures. Using these data, a toxicological analysis has been performed on the bases of 74 animal species and plants/zootoxins implicated, site of exposure (indoor/outdoor and 75 location), route of exposure, clinical signs and final outcome. In the case of plant poisoning 76 episodes, all the plants were classified according to their toxic principles to verify the 77 correspondence with the observed clinical signs. 78 79 2.1. Statistical analysis 80 Data analysis was performed with IBM SPSS Statistics for Mac, Version 26.0 (Armonk, NY: 81 IBM Corp.), while graphs were created using Prism for Mac, Version 9 (GraphPad Software 82 Inc., La Jolla, CA, USA). 83 3. Results 84 85 During the period from January 2015 to March 2019, the Poison Control Center of Milan 86 (CAV) received 932 enquiries on animal poisonings, 12.66% (n = 118) of which were related 87 to plants and zootoxins. Among these, 95 enquiries (80.51%) concerned exposures to plants

and 23 (19.49%) to zootoxins. The frequency of calls on plant- and zootoxin-related animal

distribution. The majority of the requests were toxicological enquiries from veterinarians (n

= 93; 78.81%), while 23 calls (19.49%) were from animal owners and in 2 cases (1.70%) the

poisonings over the years is depicted in Figure 1, while Figure 2 reports the monthly

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caller was unknown.

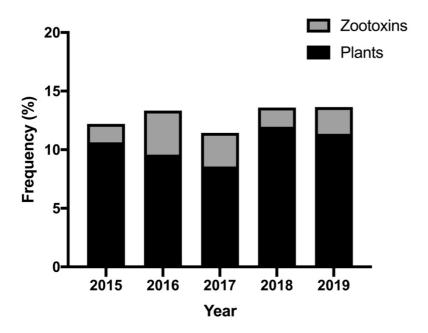


Figure 1. Frequency of domestic animal exposure (per cent) to plants and zootoxins over the years, based on the calls received by CAV from January 2015 to March 2019.

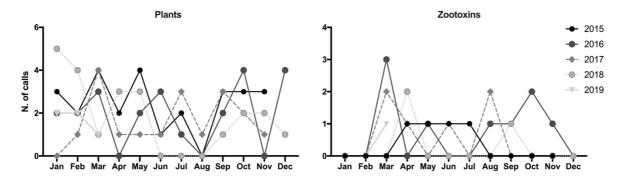


Figure 2. Monthly distribution of the calls related to plants and zootoxins, received by CAV from January 2015 to March 2019.

As for the geographical origin, most of the enquiries were from Lombardy (n = 52; 44.07%), followed by Veneto (n = 14; 11.86%), Emilia Romagna (n = 9; 7.63%), Piedmont (n = 7; 5.93%) and Tuscany (n = 7; 5.93%) (Figure 3).

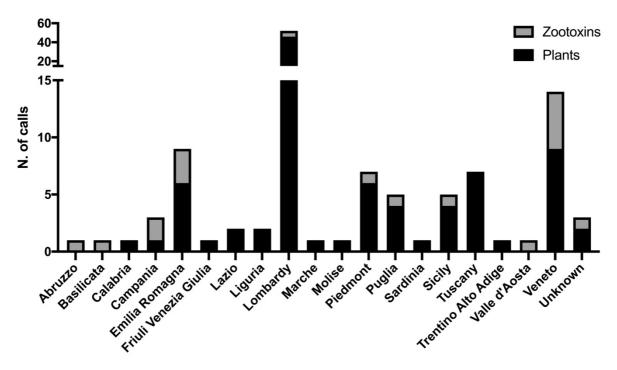


Figure 3. Geographical distribution of the calls related to animal poisoning by plants and zootoxins received by the Poison Control Centre of Milan (CAV) during the period January 2015 - March 2019

In total, 46.61% of the exposures to plants and zootoxins occurred indoor (n = 55) and 47.46% outdoor (n = 56), while for 7 episodes the site was unknown (5.93%). In particular, plant poisonings occurred indoor in 50 cases (52.63%), outdoor in 38 cases (40.00%) and for 7 episodes (7.37%) this information was not available. As for the zootoxins, 5 exposures happened indoor (21.74%) and 18 (78.26%) outdoor (Figure 4).

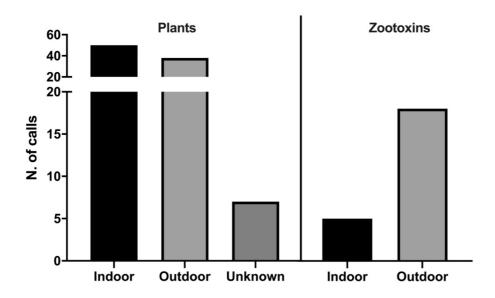


Figure 4. Site of exposure to plants and zootoxins according to the calls received by the Poison Control Centre of Milan (CAV) during the period January 2015 - March 2019.

The species most frequently involved was the dog (67.80% of the calls, n = 80), followed by the cat (26.27%, n = 31). Two episodes concerned goats (1.69%) and single cases were reported to involve cattle, a guinea pig and a rabbit (0.85% each) (Figure 5).

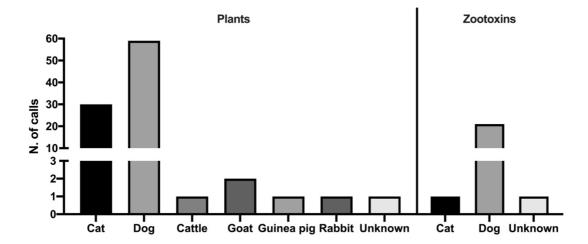


Figure 5. Species involved in suspected poisonings by plants and zootoxins based on the calls received by the Poison Control Centre of Milan (CAV) during the period January 2015 - March 2019.

Ingestion was the most common route of exposure (77.12% of the poisoning episodes, n = 91), followed by injection (snake bites; 11.86%, n = 14) but also inhalation (0.85%, n = 1) and topical (5.93%, n = 7) exposures were reported (Figure 6).

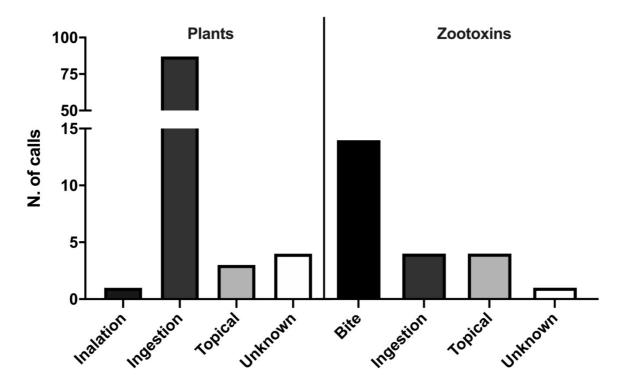


Figure 6. Routes of exposure to plants and zootoxins reported to the Poison Control Centre of Milan (CAV) during the period January 2015 - March 2019.

One-hundred and ten poisoning episodes resulted from single exposures (93.22%), 4 cases were due to repeated exposures (3.39%, all plant-related poisonings) and for 4 cases the frequency was unknown (3.39%, all involving plants).

## 3.1 Involved plants

The involved plants are listed in Table 1. Among them, know toxic species can be found, together with plants which are not reported in literature as related to poisoning episodes in animals (*Arbutus unedo, Camellia japonica, Chlorophytum comosum, Jasminum officinale, Juglans regia, Maclura pomifera*, Fam. Orchidaceae, *Saintpaulia spp.*).

Scientific name	Common name	Tovins	Daisanad
Scientific name	Common name	Toxins	Poisoned
			animals

Acacia dealbata	Mimosa	Cyanogenic glycosides	3 cats
Aesculus hippocastanum	Horse chestnut (conkers)	Aesculin (glycosidic saponin) and other saponins.	2 dogs
Aloe vera	Aloe vera	Saponins, anthraquinones	1 cat
Anemone spp.	Anemone	Protoanemonin	1 dog
Anthurium spp.	Flamingo flower	Insoluble calcium oxalates	3 cats, 1 dog
Arbutus unedo	Strawberry tree	Non-toxic	2 dogs
Arum spp.	Arum	Calcium oxalate, proteolytic enzyme	2 dogs
Atropa belladonna	Deadly nightshade	Tropane alkaloids (atropine, scopolamine, and hyoscyamine)	1 dog
Aucuba japonica	Japanese laurel	Iridoid glycoside aucubin	1 cat
Buxus sempervirens	Common box	Alkaloids	1 dog
Camellia japonica	Camellia	Non-toxic	1 dog
Capsicum annuum	Chili pepper	Capsaicin, capsaicinoids	1 dog
Chlorophytum comosum	Spider plant	Non-toxic	1 dog
Cinnamomum camphora	Camphor tree	Camphor	1 dog
Clivia spp.	Clivia	Lycorine and other alkaloids	1 cat
Cycas revoluta	Sago palm	Azoglycosides (cycasin, macrozamin, and neocycasin); β-N-methylamino-L-alanine; unidentified highmolecular-weight compound	9 dogs
Dianthus spp.	Carnation	Triterpenoid saponins	1 dog
Dracaena marginata	Red-margined dracaena	Steroidal saponins and	1 cat
Euphorbia pulcherrima	Poinsettia	glycosides  Diterpenoid euphorbol esters and steroids	1 cat, 5 dogs, 1 Guinea pig, 1 rabbit
Ficus benjamina	Weeping fig	Proteases (ficin, and ficusin)	1 cat
Hedera helix	English ivy	Triterpenoid saponins (hederagenin)	1 dog
Hedera helix hibernica	Irish ivy	Triterpenoid saponins (hederagenin)	1 dog
Helleborus niger	Christmas rose	Cardiac glycosides, saponins, protoanemonin	1 cat
Hyacinthus orientalis	Hyacinth	Alkaloids ( <i>i.e.</i> , lycorine) and insoluble calcium oxalates	1 dog
		Commence de la	7 doss
Hydrangea macrophylla	Bigleaf hydrangea	Cyanogenic glycoside (hydrangin)	7 dogs

Juglans regia	English walnut (husks)	Non-toxic	3 dogs
Lantana camara	Lantana	Pentacyclic triterpenoids	1 dog
Lilium spp.	Lily	Steroidal glycoalkaloids and steroidal saponins	2 cats, 1 dog
Maclura pomifera	Osage orange	Non-toxic	1 dog
Mespilus germanica	Medlar (fruits)	Cyanogenic glycosides, hydrocyanic acid	1 dog
Nandina domestica	Heavenly bamboo	Cyanogenic glycosides; protoberberine and berberine alkaloids	1 cat, 1 dog
Narcissus spp.	Daffodil	Lycorine and other alkaloids; insoluble calcium oxalates	2 cats, 1 dog
Nerium oleander	Oleander	Cardiac glycosides: oleandrin, oleandrigenin; neroside and oleandroside	1 cat, 1 cow, 2 dogs
Orchidaceae (Fam.)	Orchid	Non-toxic	1 dog
Pelargonium spp.	Geranium	Monoterpene alcohols: geraniol, linalool	1 cat
Persea americana	Avocado	Persin (long-chain fatty alcohol)	1 cat
Phytolacca americana	Pokeweed	Saponis (phytolaccosides), alkaloids, insoluble calcium oxalates, other compounds (histamine, potassium salts)	1 dog
Primula spp.	Primrose	triterpene saponins; quinones (primin and related hidro-quinones); phenolic derivatives (resorcinol, saligenin); alcoholic glycosides; (salicin, salicilin derivatives); lactones	1 cat, 1 unknown
Prunus domestica	Plum (fruits)	Cyanogenic glycosides	1 dog
Prunus laurocerasus	Cherry laurel	Cyanogenic glycosides amygdalin and prunasin	1 dog, 2 goats
Pteridium aquilinum	Eagle fern	Norsesquiterpene glycoside ptaquiloside; thiaminase	1 cat
Ranunculus spp.	Buttercup	Protoanemonin	2 cats
Ricinus communis	Castor bean	Phytotoxalbumin ricin; piperidine alkaloid ricinine	1 dog
Saintpaulia spp.	African violet	Non-toxic	1 cat
Senecio vulgaris	Groundsel	Pyrrolizidine alkaloids	1 cat
Solanum pseudocapsicum	Winter cherry	Solanine, solanocapsine and other alkaloids	1 dog
Spathiphyllum spp.	Peace lily	Insoluble calcium oxalates	1 dog
Taxus baccata	European yew (flowers and berries)	Taxine alkaloids, cyanogenic glycosides and irritant oils	1 cat

Viscum album	Mistletoe	Viscotoxins, toxic alkaloids and lectins	1 dog
Zantedeschia aethiopica	Calla lily	Insoluble calcium 1 cat oxalates and proteolytic	
		enzymes	

Table 1. Plants involved in animal poisoning episodes, based on the calls received by CAV during the period January 2015 - March 2019.

### 3.1.2 Clinical signs and outcome

In the majority of the cases, symptoms started within few hours of ingestion, but in some animals the symptom onset occurred after days from the exposure. The most frequently reported clinical signs due to plant exposures were gastrointestinal (mainly vomiting and sialorrhea but also diarrhea/melena), neurological (in particular asthenia and ataxia but also mydriasis, agitation, hallucinations, convulsions and hypertonia) and cardiorespiratory (arrhythmias, bradycardia, hypotension and dyspnea). The outcome has been reported only for half of the episodes (51.58%, n = 49) and it was positive for 46 animals (93.88%) and fatal for 3 animals (6.12%). The fatal episodes were related to the ingestion of *Capsicum annuum* (a dog), *Nerium oleander* (a dog) and *Prunus laurocerasus* (a goat).

### 3.2 Involved zootoxins

The zootoxins involved in episodes of animal poisoning reported to CAV are indicated in Table 2.

Scientific name	Common name	Poisoned animals
Bufo bufo	Common toad	3 dogs
Cnidaria (phylum)	Jellyfish	2 dogs
Thaumetopoea pityocampa	Pine processionary	1 dog, 1 unknown
Salamandra salamandra	Salamander	2 dogs
Vipera aspis	Viper	1 cat, 13 dogs

Table 2. Zootoxins involved in animal poisoning episodes, based on the calls received by CAV during the period January 2015 - March 2019.

## 3.2.2 Clinical signs and outcome

171 In all the reported cases, symptoms started within 24h of exposure. Neurological (tremors, 172 convulsions, asthenia and ataxia) and cardiorespiratory (arrhythmias, bradycardia, 173 hypotension and dyspnea) signs were the most frequently described, together with local 174 manifestations depending on the affected part (sialorrhea, edema, hyperemia and pain). 175 The outcome was positive for 14 animals (60.87%), fatal for 1 animal (4.35%) and unknown 176 in 8 cases (34.78%). In particular, the only fatal poisoning was related to the ingestion of 177 larval forms of *Thaumetopoea pityocampa* by a dog. 178 4. Discussion 179 180 The data collected in this study emphasizes the not negligible impact of plants and zootoxins 181 on animal poisoning, categories that are often wrongly regarded as minor agents of 182 intoxication. 183 During this period, 12.66% (n = 118) of the total calls received by the Poison Control Center 184 of Milan (CAV) were related to plants (95 enquiries, 10.19% of the total enquiries of the 185 period) and zootoxins (n = 23, 2.47%). 186 As for the monthly distribution of the enquiries, peaks have been observed at the beginning 187 of the year and in spring (Figure 2), trends that are similar to those reported in the 188 European literature (Anadón et al., 2018). 189 Regarding the plants, around half of the exposures occurred indoor (52.63%) and were 190 related to houseplants (i.e., Dracaena marginata, Euphorbia pulcherrima, Spathiphyllum 191 spp., Zantedeschia aethiopica, etc.). Glycoside-containing species were responsible for a 192 considerable number of poisoning episodes in dogs. Among them, several cases have been 193 associated to the exposure to sago palm (Cycas revoluta), a popular ornamental palm-like 194 plant with well-known toxic effects on animals (Cortinovis and Caloni, 2013; Cortinovis and 195 Caloni, 2017; Fatourechi et al., 2013; Forrester et al., 2019). All parts of the plant, and in 196 particular the seeds, contain phytotoxins: the azoglycosides cycasin (hepatotoxic and 197 carcinogenic), macrozamin and neocycasin, the neurotoxic amino-acid β-N-methylamino-L-198 alanine and an unidentified high molecular weight compound (Botha and Penrith, 2009; 199 Clarke and Burney, 2017; Forrester et al., 2019). Many poisoning cases involving dogs are 200 described in literature, and in Europe episodes have been previously reported in Italy by 201 CAV (Caloni et al., 2013; Caloni et al., 2017; Cortinovis and Caloni, 2013) and in Sweden by 202 the Swedish Poisons Information Centre (Holmgren and Hultén, 2009). Dogs are also

203 frequently exposed to cyanogenic glycoside-containing plants: for instance, many poisoning 204 cases were related to bigleaf hydrangea (Hydrangea macrophylla), characterized by the 205 presence of the cyanogenic glycoside hydrangin. Heavenly bamboo (Nandina domestica) 206 (which contains protoberberine and berberine alkaloids besides the cyanogenic ones), 207 cherry laurel (Prunus laurocerasus), plum (Prunus domestica) and medlar (Mespilus 208 germanica) were also reported as causes of intoxication by cyanogenic glycoside-containing 209 plants in dogs, and the exposure to oleander (Nerium oleander), a species containing potent 210 cardiac glycosides, resulted in a fatal outcome. 211 Glycoside-containing plants were also responsible of intoxications in cats. Heavenly bamboo 212 (Nandina domestica) and oleander (Nerium oleander) were found responsible of poisoning 213 episodes in this species as well as in dogs, and other cases were related to mimosa (Acacia 214 dealbata), buttercup (Ranunculus spp.) and Japanese laurel (Aucuba japonica). 215 Several poisoning episodes involving glycoside-containing plants have been described in 216 literature. In particular, cases due to bigleaf hydrangea (Hydrangea macrophylla) exposures 217 are frequently reported (Caloni et al., 2013; Caloni et al., 2012; Le Mura, 2018), and a fatal 218 intoxication in a cat has been observed by CAV in a ten-year survey (Caloni et al., 2013). 219 Also a fatal case of oleander (Nerium oleander) exposure, a plant frequently implicated in 220 companion animal poisoning in Europe (Barbier, 2005; Caloni et al., 2013; Giuliano Albo and 221 Nebbia, 2004; Mygdal et al., 2015; Sapin, 2004), has been described before in pets by CAV 222 (Caloni et al., 2013). Moreover, many European investigations have reported pet poisoning 223 incidents due to glycoside-containing species (Barbier, 2005; Lassak, 2005; McFarland et al., 224 2017; Sapin, 2004) and, in Germany, Prunus spp. represents the first category listed in the 225 top five plant species responsible for enquiries to the poison centers for animal exposures 226 (McFarland et al., 2017). 227 Oleander (Nerium oleander) and cherry laurel (Prunus laurocerasus) were also responsible 228 for poisoning cases in cattle and goats, respectively, the latter with a fatal outcome. Indeed, 229 many episodes of glycoside-containing plant intoxications have been described in 230 ruminants: sheep and goat poisonings due to exposure to cherry laurel (Prunus 231 laurocerasus) have been reported in literature (Schediwy et al., 2015) also with a fatal 232 outcome (Schmidt et al., 2013), while oleander (Nerium oleander) is a very frequent cause 233 of plant poisoning in ruminants (Caloni et al., 2013; Caloni et al., 2012; Cortinovis and 234 Caloni, 2013; Garcia-Arroyo et al., 2017; Guitart et al., 2010; Rubini et al., 2019) in Europe.

235 Alkaloid-containing plants were also often involved in companion animal intoxications. As 236 for the dog, episodes due to deadly nightshade (Atropa belladonna), common box (Buxus 237 sempervirens), chili pepper (Capsicum annuum), mistletoe (Viscum album) and winter cherry 238 (Solanum pseudocapsicum) were recorded. Chili pepper (Capsicum annuum), a plant 239 containing capsaicin and capsaicinoid alkaloids and known to induce acute toxicity in several 240 animal species (Glinsukon et al., 1980; Surh and Sup Lee, 1995), was responsible for a fatal 241 episode involving a dog. 242 Other poisoning cases in dogs were due to exposures to daffodil (Narcissus spp.) and 243 hyacinth (Hyacinthus orientalis), two species containing alkaloids (i.e., lycorine) as well as 244 insoluble calcium oxalates. Daffodil (Narcissus spp.) was also related to intoxications in cats, 245 together with clivia (Clivia spp.), groundsel (Senecio vulgaris) and European yew (Taxus 246 baccata). Cases of companion animal poisoning by alkaloid-containing plants are well 247 documented in the European literature (Berny et al., 2010; Caloni et al., 2013; Caloni et al., 248 2012; Caloni et al., 2017; Campbell, 1998; Campbell and Chapman, 2000a, b; McFarland et 249 al., 2017) and in particular, various episodes of intoxication due to exposures to European 250 yew (Taxus baccata)(Caloni et al., 2013; McFarland et al., 2017) and mistletoe (Viscum 251 album)(Caloni et al., 2013; Campbell, 1998; Campbell and Chapman, 2000b) have been 252 reported. 253 Oxalate-containing plants are another class often implicated in pet poisoning. 254 Arum (Arum spp.) and peace lily (Spathiphyllum spp.) were responsible for intoxications in 255 dogs whereas flamingo flower (Anthurium spp.) caused intoxications both in the dog and the 256 cat and calla lily (Zantedeschia aethiopica) in one cat. These plants, and in particular peace 257 lily (Spathiphyllum spp.) and calla lily (Zantedeschia aethiopica), which are widespread and 258 popular ornamental species, are frequently mentioned in reports on domestic animal 259 poisoning episodes by European authors (Caloni et al., 2013; Caloni et al., 2012; Lassak, 260 2005; Le Mura, 2018; Sapin, 2004), confirming the toxicological risk related to exposure to 261 this plant class. 262 Weeping fig (Ficus benjamina), a protease-containing plant, and aloe vera (Aloe vera), together with red-margined dracaena (Dracaena marginata), two saponin-containing 263 264 species, were found responsible of cat poisoning episodes (one case each). 265 Weeping fig, whose leaves and cortex contain ficin, a proteolytic enzyme, and other toxic 266 substances such as furocoumarins and ficusin (ASPCA, 2020; CABI, 2014), has been reported

267 by the CNITV (Centre National d'Informations Toxicologiques Vétérinaires) as the major 268 responsible of plant poisoning episodes in animals in France (Barbier, 2005). Similarly, 269 another author stated, on the bases of the data collected by CNITV, that weeping fig was 270 one the most frequently ingested plants by small animals (Keck et al., 2004). In accordance 271 with that, two Italian papers pointed out that Ficus spp. was among the most frequently 272 implicated plants in cat poisoning episodes (Giuliano Albo et al., 2003; Giuliano Albo and 273 Nebbia, 2004), while two investigations by CAV reported Ficus benjamina has a culprit of 274 intoxication also in the dog (Caloni et al., 2013; Caloni et al., 2012). Red-margined dracaena 275 (Dracaena marginata) is another plant frequently mentioned in the European literature as a 276 cause of poisoning both in cats and dogs (Barbier, 2005; Caloni et al., 2013; Lassak, 2005; 277 Sapin, 2004; Schediwy et al., 2015). 278 Another saponin-containing plant, horse chestnut (Aesculus hippocastanum), which 279 contains aesculin, a glycosidic saponin (Campbell, 1998), has been implicated in dog 280 intoxications, as it has been formerly observed by CAV in a 2000–2011 survey (Caloni et al., 281 2013) and in other European countries (Campbell, 1998; Lassak, 2005; Sapin, 2004; 282 Schediwy et al., 2015). Cases of dog poisoning by two species of ivy, namely English ivy 283 (Hedera helix) and Irish ivy (Hedera helix Hibernica), which contain triterpenoid saponins 284 (i.e., hederagenin) were also registered (one each). In Germany, Hedera spp. is included in 285 the top five plant species responsible for calls to the poison centers for animal exposures 286 (McFarland et al., 2017) and cases involving English ivy (Hedera helix) have been reported in 287 England (Campbell, 1998) and France (Lassak, 2005). 288 The diterpenoid-containing species poinsettia (Euphorbia pulcherrima), a plant frequently 289 associated with poisoning episodes in domestic animals (Barbier, 2005; Bertero et al., 2020; 290 Caloni et al., 2013; Caloni et al., 2012; Caloni et al., 2017; Campbell and Chapman, 2000c; 291 Cortinovis and Caloni, 2013; Curti et al., 2009; Le Mura, 2018; McFarland et al., 2017), has 292 been found responsible for intoxications mainly in dogs, but also in a cat, a guinea pig and a 293 rabbit. Lilies (Lilium spp.), plants known for their nephrotoxic effects in cats, which may lead 294 to acute renal failure (Panziera et al., 2019), had been related to 2 episodes involving cats 295 and one involving a dog. Indeed, while the cat is the only species known to develop renal 296 failure after the ingestion of Lilium spp., dogs may show gastrointestinal signs (Bates et al., 297 2015b; Botha and Penrith, 2009). Poisoning cases by lilies, particularly in cats, are numerous 298 and reported all over Europe (Balka et al., 2011; Barbier, 2005; Berny et al., 2010; Caloni et

299 al., 2013; Caloni et al., 2012; Caloni et al., 2017; Fourez, 2014; Schediwy et al., 2015; 300 Sturgeon and Campbell, 2006). 301 Finally, it is worthwhile to mention that even if English walnut (Juglans regia) is not reported 302 in literature as responsible for animal poisoning episodes, the onset of tremorgenic 303 syndromes with tremors, ataxia, hyperesthesia have been described in dogs after the 304 ingestion of moldy walnuts due to mycotoxin contamination (Munday et al., 2008; Richard 305 et al., 1981), generally by penitrem A and roquefortine (Walter, 2002). In our cases, 306 however, the 3 dogs that ingested English walnut husks developed just mild gastrointestinal 307 symptoms with no neurological signs. 308 As for the zootoxins, the dog was the species most commonly concerned, with just one case 309 related to a cat. Episodes involving venomous viper (Vipera aspis), common toad (Bufo 310 bufo), salamander (Salamandra salamandra) and pine processionary (Thaumetopoea 311 pityocampa) were reported, similarly to what has been described in literature (Berny et al., 312 2010; Caloni et al., 2017; Lervik et al., 2010; Niza et al., 2012; Pelander et al., 2010; Pouzot-313 Nevoret et al., 2017; Pouzot-Nevoret et al., 2018). In particular, dog poisonings due to pine 314 processionary (Thaumetopoea pityocampa) are very common in Europe (Caloni et al., 2018; 315 Caloni et al., 2012; Guitart et al., 1999; Kaszak et al., 2015; Lassak, 2005; Perez-Lopez et al., 316 2004; Pouzot-Nevoret et al., 2017), as well as cases due to venomous viper bites (Barbier, 317 2005; Caloni et al., 2018; Caloni et al., 2012; Caloni et al., 2017; Lassak, 2005; Lervik et al., 318 2010; Schediwy et al., 2015). Episodes involving salamander, whose skin glands produce 319 neurotoxic alkaloids (i.e. samandarin and samandaron) (Erjavec et al., 2017) and common 320 toad, whose parotid glands secrete biogenic amines and steroid derivatives (i.e., 321 bufodienolide and bufotoxin, with digitalis-like effects) which can cause from local irritation 322 to systemic signs (gastrointestinal, cardiac and neurological alterations)(Barbosa et al., 323 2009), have also been reported in the European literature (Barbier, 2005; Curti et al., 2009; 324 Erjavec et al., 2017; Lassak, 2005; Schediwy et al., 2015; Scheer et al., 2005). Moreover, 2 cases related to exposures to jellyfish (phylum Cnidaria) have been registered: 325 326 the dogs involved developed oral irritation, sialorrhea and minor gastrointestinal signs with 327 a positive outcome. Canine exposures to jellyfish have also been reported in England by the 328 Veterinary Poisons Information Service (VPIS), with similar symptoms (Bates et al., 2015a). 329 Indeed, cnidarians are very common in the European seas and several species possess

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remarkable stinging properties (Killi et al., 2020).

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#### 5. Conclusion

This survey presents an interesting insight on the issue of plant and zootoxin poisoning in domestic animals, topic that is often disregarded and scarcely investigated. Actually, the information showed by our research proves the relevance of plants and zootoxins as poisoning agents and point out the need to carry out a continuous and widespread investigation on domestic animal exposures, to promptly identify and appropriately respond to emerging toxicological risks. In this regard, the importance of a proper classification of the plants on the basis of their taxonomic features need to be stressed, being a crucial step for the identification of the toxins involved and in light of the species-specific toxicity that characterizes many compounds.

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