

SCENTED CANDLES KILL PET BIRDS!

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LOST: One Peach-faced Lovebird; One rare Lutino Lovebird; One Quaker Parrot

Kenny and Judy Ford of Missouri Valley, Iowa went out and purchased several fragrances of GLADE® CANDLE SCENTS and one Wal-Mart brand scented candle. Kenny thought they would freshen their home during the long winter months without fresh air. The candles were burned frequently for 2 days before their first lovebird died. The second lovebird died later that evening. The Quaker was acting strangely the third day and by that afternoon, was also dead.

Kenny and Judy were devastated at the loss of their pets. The symptoms were shakiness/trembling, inability to perch, then death. The time between the first sign and death was a matter of a couple to a few of hours. The candles had not been burned since the night before when the Quaker "Bob" succumbed in the morning.

Kenny and Judy loved their pets like children. Bob, the Quaker, was their pride and joy. Every time Kenny would come out to my store, he would tell me of all the new things that Bob had learned to do and say. He was one really proud "parrot dad". So, I began to make some phone calls. I called several different divisions of the company whose candles the couple had purchased. I spoke with Lee Langsley in the medical issues department of S.C. Johnson Wax. He gave me some other numbers to contact. No one seemed to have any answers. Finally, I was contacted by Carey Manderfield, senior toxicologist at S.C. Johnson Wax. From this conversation, I found that there was no one named Lee Langsley associated with the company. There is, however, a person in the department named Lee Swanson, I was told.

I explained the situation to Mr. Manderfield. We spoke at length about the birds' delicate respiratory systems and the validity of the claim. (Mr. and Mrs. Ford had already checked in to the possibility of carbon monoxide poisoning which seemed to be the only other possibility of why the birds died so quickly.) Mr. Manderfield did confess that they have not tested the products in question with birds. Mr. Manderfield promised to get back to me with a response from the company within a week. It's been almost two weeks now and I've yet to hear from the company in any form.

I also contacted Gillian Willis, a toxicologist friend from Vancouver, B.C., Canada, about the products being used in the Ford's home. Although it doesn't pertain to the candles specifically, the information I received is quite pertinent. The candles have a higher concentration of the volatile (essential) oils than the plug-ins contain and it is released in to the atmosphere much more quickly.

Ms. Willis was quite helpful and provided the following information:

- Glade Plug-Ins contain >90% fragrances and 3-6% thickeners
- The fragrances are a mixture of volatile (essential) oils. The majority of these oils can cause either stimulation or depression of the central nervous system as well as possible irritation to the eyes, nose, and upper respiratory tract, depending on the oil and concentration used. Birds are very susceptible to the effects of inhaled volatile toxins including essential oils.
- I have a report on file of a woman who experienced marked respiratory tract irritation caused by excessive use of Glade Plug-Ins in her home "to keep it smelling fresh".
- More recently, I was consulted on a case involving two cockatiels that presented to my avian vets. One bird had been lethargic for a few days and was brought in to the clinic for assessment. The owners brought in its mate to keep it company during hospitalization. Over a period of hours, both birds became progressively lethargic, could not stand, developed hyperventilation, and respiratory distress. Despite aggressive intensive care treatment, both birds died within a minute of one another (within 24 hours of presentation to the clinic). Necropsy revealed congestion in the lungs. There were no other significant findings.
- Heavy metal poisoning was considered and ruled out radiographically. After an extensive investigation in to the possible cause of death of the two birds, both being apparently healthy prior to being brought in to the clinic, the cause of death was likely due to exposure during transportation in the car to two pine scented impregnated paper air fresheners. The length of exposure was approximately one hour in a closed vehicle. Clinical manifestations in both birds were consistent with volatile oil inhalation exposure.
- The take-home message is that any volatile oil (fragrance) has the potential for causing illness and possible death in birds. Obviously, the concentration in a product and length of exposure are factors to be considered. Products containing a high concentration of volatile oils, as in Glade Plug-Ins, should be avoided.

The Glade candles that were involved in the three day period at the Ford's home were vanilla, peach, potpourri, cinnamon, and one Wal-Mart brand scented candle (spiced apple).

I can attest to the fact that the birds were in apparent good health before this situation occurred. The birds were all in separate rooms when they succumbed. There was a candle burning at different times in all of the rooms so there is not one specific fragrance that could have been at fault.

What I expected from my phone calls was the possibility of getting warning labels displayed on the various products that could be causing harm to, or death of, our pet birds. I have had no response, as promised, from the company so I must assume that they have no plans to attach warning labels to their products at this time and that they are not sharing our serious concerns.

Many manufacturers have started making their cleaning products 'more pleasing' to the senses by including these (fragrances) essential oils. The bottom line is to protect yourself and be aware of the possible hazard these products could cause to the health of your pet bird. Volatile (essential) oils are in many products that we frequently use in our homes.

Ms. Sudds can be contacted by email at beakers@probe.net or phone 712-642-4578 (24 hour emergency) or fax 712-642-3710

Beakers Parrot Society's (www.probe.net/~beakers) goal is to inform bird owners of how to care for, breed, and love their birds to the best of their ability. Beakers Parrot Society is dedicated to the preservation and propagation of all species and will not be prejudiced because of species, size, mutations, etc. The Society is also dedicated to funding worthwhile projects to promote avian research and cooperative breeding programs.

This is the article that I've written because of the Glade Candle problem. Please, all newsletter editors and individuals, get this information to all of the pertinent lists and publications that you have access to. Everyone, please release this article to your local newspapers.

I hereby waive all copyright to the contents. I want every bird owner to know the dangers.

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