



Oak Trees, Acorn Toxicity, and Disease Risks: Protecting Your Pets and Community

Oak trees are a staple of natural landscapes, providing shade, beauty, and habitat for wildlife. However, they can also pose risks to both pets and people, particularly when acorns drop in the fall and when trees succumb to disease. Understanding these risks can help pet owners and community members take steps to keep their environment safe.

Acorn Toxicity in Dogs

The oak trees surrounding Rossmoor Dog Park produce a large number of acorns during the fall, typically from **September through December**. The exact timing can vary depending on weather conditions and the type of oak tree.

While acorns may seem harmless, they can be **highly toxic to dogs**. Even small quantities can pose a significant risk, especially for smaller breeds. Acorns contain **tannins**, which can cause:

- **Gastrointestinal distress** (vomiting, diarrhea, and loss of appetite)
- **Severe kidney complications** in extreme cases

- **Lethargy and dehydration**
- **Shock** (in rare and severe poisoning cases)

What to Do If Your Dog Ingests Acorns

If your dog shows symptoms of acorn poisoning—including vomiting, bloody diarrhea, or lethargy—**contact your veterinarian immediately**. Do not induce vomiting unless instructed to do so by a professional.

How to Prevent Acorn Exposure

- **Monitor your dog closely** while at the park, particularly during acorn season.
- **Discourage dogs from chewing or eating anything off the ground.**
- **Consider using a basket muzzle** if your dog is prone to eating foreign objects.
- **Educate fellow pet owners** about the risks to help keep all dogs safe.

By staying vigilant, we can ensure a safer environment for our pets at Rossmoor Dog Park.

Oak Tree Diseases and Associated Risks

Beyond acorns, oak trees can develop diseases that may pose risks to both **human and animal health**. Some of these diseases weaken trees, making them unstable, while others create toxic conditions that can impact respiratory health.

Common Oak Tree Diseases

1. Oak Wilt (*Bretziella fagacearum*)

- A fungal disease that spreads through root connections and insect activity.
- Causes **rapid leaf wilting, discoloration, and tree death**.
- **Risk:** Not directly toxic, but diseased trees can become unstable and hazardous.

2. Sudden Oak Death (*Phytophthora ramorum*)

- A water mold infection that affects oaks and other trees.

- Leads to cankers, leaf blight, and eventual tree death.
- **Risk:** Infected trees may harbor toxic mold spores, which can cause respiratory issues in animals and humans.

3. Hypoxylon Canker (*Hypoxylon atropunctatum*)

- A fungal disease that thrives in weakened oaks.
- Forms dark spores on bark and causes decay.
- **Risk:** Fungal spores may cause respiratory issues if inhaled in large amounts.

4. Armillaria Root Rot (*Armillaria spp.*)

- A fungus that decays tree roots, leading to tree collapse.
- **Risk:** Some Armillaria mushrooms are edible, but others can cause gastrointestinal distress in humans and animals.


5. Black Mold & Wood Decay Fungi

- Dead oak trees decompose and develop toxic mold, such as *Aspergillus* or *Stachybotrys* (black mold).
- **Risks:**
 - **Humans:** Can cause respiratory infections, allergies, and skin irritation.
 - **Animals:** Dogs and cats may suffer from respiratory distress or poisoning if exposed.

Dangers of Dead Oak Trees in Wet Environments

When oak trees die, especially in moist environments, they can become hazardous:

 **Falling Hazards:** Weak branches may fall, posing risks to pets and people.

 **Toxic Fungi & Mold:** Dogs chewing moldy wood may develop vomiting, diarrhea, or neurological issues.

 **Toxic Mushrooms:** Deadly mushrooms (such as *Amanita* species) can grow near decaying roots.

 **Airborne Spores:** Wet conditions promote fungal spore spread, increasing the risk of respiratory infections.

How to Stay Safe Around Oak Trees

- ✓ **Prevent dogs from chewing on dead wood or fallen bark.**
- ✓ **Keep pets away from moldy areas and rotting logs.**
- ✓ **Watch for symptoms of mold exposure (coughing, lethargy, vomiting) and seek veterinary care if needed.**
- ✓ **If working near dead trees, wear gloves and a mask to avoid inhaling fungal spores.**

Community Awareness & Action

By staying informed and taking precautions, we can reduce risks associated with **acorns, diseased trees, and toxic fungi**. If you suspect a diseased or dangerous oak tree in your area, consider **reporting it to local authorities** for assessment and potential removal.