



# NEWS

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**CONTACT: Kristine Roselius**

415.749.4900

## **WOOD SMOKE IMPACTS ANIMAL HEALTH, TOO**

*Vets, pet advocates and air quality officials warn about wood smoke and animal respiratory issues*

**SAN FRANCISCO** – Pet owners, vets and air quality officials are working together to raise awareness of the harmful effects that wood smoke has on animals – especially those with asthma, bronchitis and other respiratory issues. Veterinarians routinely see dogs with chronic bronchitis, cats with asthma (episodes of respiratory distress), and nasal and lung cancers.

Even horses, which exercise outside on a regular basis, are adversely impacted by wood smoke. Gathering earlier today at Tony LaRussa's Animal Rescue Foundation, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and pet and equine veterinarians joined forces asking residents to consider their pets' health, as well as their own, before burning wood.

"Carcinogens are found in wood smoke, and we routinely see dogs with chronic bronchitis, cats with asthma, as well as nasal and lung cancers," said Alamo Animal Hospital DVM Risa Barrett. "What many people do not recognize is that, not only is our health impacted by the toxins and particulate matter in wood smoke, but so is the health of our pets."

Horses, too, develop respiratory allergies; their immune system has an extra strong reaction to poor air quality. Horses exposed to wood smoke and other particulates experience increased mucous and inflamed airways, which makes breathing difficult.

"Exposure to wood smoke, like cigarette smoke, has been linked to increased frequency and severity of respiratory illnesses such as asthma, bronchitis and lung disease," said Lisa Fasano, communications director with the Bay Area Air District. "We are here today to remind everyone that wood smoke not only impacts our neighbors and community, but it can impact everyone in the home, including our pets."

ARF hosted the event today to help the Air District elevate the issue of wood smoke's impacts on animals and to get the word out to pet guardians that considering the impact of wood smoke on their animal, they may reconsider burning wood at all.

"At ARF, we take pet health and our adoption process very seriously and have a strict process by which we screen new additions to our facility," said ARF Executive Director Elena Bicker. "Because respiratory issues are a real problem for pets – particularly kittens, puppies and more mature pets – we applaud the Air District for raising awareness and educating the public about the impacts of wood smoke, not just on people, but on animals as well"

Experts suggest that you consult your veterinarian if you notice symptoms of respiratory disease or distress. Reduce your pet's exposure to wood smoke pollutants by burning less often, keeping your pet away from wood-burning stoves and fireplaces, and avoiding exercising your pet during peak pollutant alerts, including *Winter Spare the Air* days.

Wood smoke is the largest source of wintertime air pollution in the Bay Area and contains harmful pollutants such as particulate matter and carbon monoxide, as well as toxins which are linked to increased cancer rates in adults. In the winter, wood smoke from the 1.4 million fireplaces and wood stoves in the Bay Area contributes about one-third of the harmful particulate pollution in the air.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District ([www.baaqmd.gov](http://www.baaqmd.gov)) is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality in the nine-county Bay Area.

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