

Questions Raised About Safety Of Popular Seresto Flea Collar

NEW YORK (CBSNewYork) – We are a nation of pet lovers and spend more than \$70 billion a year on them.

But recently, a popular product designed to keep them healthy was called into question as potentially causing some adverse effects, and even death.

As CBS2's Ali Bauman reports, Pierre was Rhonda Bomwell's much-loved 9-year-old Papillion.

"He was the sweetest dog, you know, he just, you know, like the most well behaved dog," Bomwell said.

At a vet visit last May, a flea collar was recommended. She says it wasn't Pierre's usual doctor, but she followed the advice, and put a Seresto collar on him. And that, she claims, is when the trouble started.

"In the morning, he, he didn't want to go outside. He was kind of like lethargic," Bomwell said.

She says during the day he seemed to be staggering, and adds later his condition got worse.

"He just went into a full-blown seizure, and his eyes rolled back and he stiffened up," she said.

Bomwell said she gave him CPR and rushed him to an animal hospital, but says a vet's assistant soon told her, unfortunately, it was too late.

"When she asked me what happened, I looked at my partner, and I said 'Oh my god, it's the collar,'" she said.

Elanco, the parent company of Seresto, says without a necropsy, there is no way of knowing Pierre's cause of death, and in a lengthy written statement, added "there is no established link between exposure to the active ingredients and death."

The [Center for Biological Diversity](#) is a national environmental nonprofit. It says they had received a tip about Seresto, outside of Bomwell's case, and obtained reports from the EPA.

"And what we got back was really striking. You know, many pet deaths, and just tens of thousands of incidents, just from this one product alone," said Nathan Donley, a senior scientist with the Center for Biological Diversity.

Donley says even though the incidents reported did not result in investigations, there is still cause for concern.

"When you're seeing 75,000 people say essentially the same thing, it's not an anecdote. This is a troubling trend that has really just been ignored by our pesticide regulators, and, at the very least, this should have been monitored or, or studied," he said.

WEB EXTRA: [Read Elanco's Full Statement Replying To Our Questions](#) (.pdf)

Elanco declined our invitation for an on-camera interview but added in their statement:

- That since its initial approval in 2012, Seresto has protected more than 70 million pets, with an incident report rate of .3%
- More than 80 regulatory authorities around the world, including the EPA rigorously reviewed the safety data
- And the active ingredients in Seresto are in the final stages of re-review with no findings of an indicative issue for pets or people

Donley says there is a regulatory failure at the EPA.

"You know, EPA had this information, and they were the ones who had it, and they were the ones who should have been doing something, because of it. They're the ones who have authority to do something because of it, and they haven't," he said.

Several veterinarians CBS2 spoke to recommend use of oral flea and tick protection, rather than collars.

“When we look at the collars, they’re just medications that are less effective at keeping fleas and ticks off of your dog,” said Zach Marteney, medical director of Meadowlands Veterinary Hospital.

As for the EPA, they did not respond to our request for comment.