

Advice to Owners With Pets Taking NSAIDs

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) can provide excellent pain control for many dogs, cats, and exotics with a variety of conditions. They are often prescribed by a veterinarian for post-surgical pain, osteoarthritis, injuries, etc. It is important that you are using and administering your pet's NSAID correctly so read the label carefully.

Client NSAID Checklist

- While using an NSAID, never administer corticosteroids (i.e. prednisone, dexamethazone, etc) or an over-the-counter NSAID such as aspirin, Advil, or Tylenol as this can lead to severe gastrointestinal upset. Over-the-counter NSAIDs should only be given without veterinary supervision.
- Be sure to inform a veterinarian if your pet is using other over-the-counter medications
- Caution should be exercised if the patient has kidney, liver or gastrointestinal problems (this is why blood work prior to using any NSAID is recommended)
- Never administer NSAIDs unless directed by a veterinarian
- Never assume an NSAID for one pet is safe for another (some are NOT)
- Administer the NSAID only as prescribed by the veterinarian

All NSAIDs should be used with caution as they have potential (while uncommon) for serious side effects. The best way to avoid the possibility of your pet suffering an adverse event from NSAIDs is for you to be fully informed about the drug and its potential side effects. Here are some common symptoms to watch for while your pet is on a prescribed NSAID. Note that in almost all circumstances, the adverse effects of NSAIDs are reversible if administration of the NSAID is discontinued when the symptoms are first noticed.

Adverse Effects Checklist

- Not eating; eating less
- Change in drinking habits (frequency or amount consumed)
- Lethargy, depression, changes in behavior
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea, black or bloody stool
- Change in urination habits
- Yellowing of gums, skin or "whites" of the eyes
- Changes in skin (scabs, redness, scratching)

Used properly, NSAIDs can be a very safe and effective treatment for pain in pets.

The Professional Staff of Merrimack Veterinary Hospital