

Excellent  
medicine  
with heart  
mind and soul



## JUDICIOUS USE OF NON-STEROIDAL ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DRUGS (NSAIDs)

Department of Anesthesia and Pain Management

### WHAT ARE NSAIDS?

NSAIDs or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs are a group of drugs that act on a specific part of the inflammation pathway. The desired result of these drugs is to decrease inflammation and provide analgesia (relief of pain) secondary to an inflammatory condition such as osteoarthritis, musculoskeletal injury, or surgery.

NSAIDs **approved** for use in veterinary medicine (mostly dogs):

- ✓ Carprofen, Vetprofen (Rimadyl, generic)
- ✓ Deracoxib (Deramox)
- ✓ Firocoxib (Previcox)
- ✓ Piroxicam
- ✓ Meloxicam (Metacam)
- ✓ Ketoprofen
- ✓ Etodolac
- ✓ Zubrin

Over the counter drugs **not approved** for use in veterinary medicine:

- ✓ Aspirin
- ✓ Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- ✓ Ibuprofen (Advil)
- ✓ Naproxen (Aleve)



### WHY CAN'T I JUST USE ASPIRIN?

Specific drugs have been developed for veterinary use that maximizes pain relief while minimizing adverse effects. Aspirin has been shown to cause ulcers and bleeding of the gastrointestinal tract in healthy dogs even after just a few doses. It is more likely to cause adverse gastrointestinal side effects than any other NSAIDs. Aspirin prevents platelets from binding and this can cause bleeding problems. This effect lasts for the life of the platelet (approximately 1 week).

Veterinary specific medications do not inhibit platelet function and have been shown to have analgesic efficacy in clinical trials. They have been formulated to have long lasting analgesia (hence the once or twice a day dosing depending on the drug). It is important to remember that all NSAIDs have the potential to cause adverse reactions.

### WHAT SITUATIONS INCREASE THE RISK FOR AN ADVERSE DRUG REACTION?

#### Caution Should Be Used In The Following Situations:

- Patients who have existing dehydration, vomiting, diarrhea, kidney disease, liver disease, and/or bleeding problems.
- Use of more than one NSAID at the same time.
- Use of steroids and NSAIDs at the same time.
- Before switching NSAIDs, or stopping steroids and starting an NSAID.
- If your pet has had a previous reaction to NSAIDs.

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## WHAT CAN I DO TO MINIMIZE THE OCCURRENCE OF ADVERSE DRUG REACTIONS?

- 🐾 Inform veterinarians of all medications that your pet is taking, including over the counter drugs and supplements.
- 🐾 Make sure that your pet's kidney and liver values are normal before starting NSAIDs.
- 🐾 Make sure that your pet is not being given more than one NSAID at the same time, or that your pet is not being treated with steroids and NSAIDs at the same time.
- 🐾 Stop administering the NSAID if your pet has lethargy, vomiting, diarrhea, bloody or dark stool, inappetence or other signs of being sick. Call your veterinarian and report the adverse events.
- 🐾 Consider that while aspirin is over the counter and cheap, it has been shown to cause damage to the GI tract and it can cause bleeding problems. If your pet has been on aspirin, surgery may have to be postponed if there are concerns about bleeding.
- 🐾 Only treat your pet for as long as is necessary; this will be determined by you and your veterinarian. If your pet is on chronic NSAID therapy, periodic blood tests should be performed to monitor liver, kidney and red blood cell values.
- 🐾 Investigate alternative methods of treating the pain that results from chronic arthritis such as physical therapy, hydrotherapy and acupuncture. These therapies may help some pets and can greatly reduce the need to use NSAIDs. Ask your surgeon or a member of our Anesthesia and Pain Management department if there may be another way to manage your pet's pain that will help reduce the need for NSAIDs. This may include the addition of medications that act on a different part of the pain pathway (tramadol, gabapentin, amantadine).
- 🐾 Death can result from administration of Tylenol to cats, because they are deficient in an enzyme needed to break down the drug.
- 🐾 Please feel free to contact either our Surgery or Anesthesia and Pain Management departments if you have any questions or concerns. It is our goal to ensure the health and well-being of your pet while minimizing the occurrence of adverse affects from medications.

*Multi-modality therapy including NSAIDs can be effective in managing your pet's pain.*



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