

Managing veterinary prescriptions

Animals are usually given veterinary medicines (VMs) registered under the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Act, unless there are none available that “meet the animal’s treatment needs”. In such circumstances, the veterinarian should follow the cascade principle for treatment.

This encourages veterinarians to use registered VMs with appropriate use as the first choice. Where this option is not available, there are other options under the cascade principle, one of these being the use of human medicines. When prescribing human medicines veterinarians must:

- Consider if there is a registered VM that will adequately achieve the intended effect and ensure the welfare of the animal and, if appropriate, choose the registered VM in preference; and
- Not supply any Medsafe-approved human medicine for use as a VM, or any registered VM off label unless the additional risks can be justified.

Veterinarians are permitted to prescribe human medicines for use in animals under the Medicines Act 1981, Medicines Regulations 1984, Misuse of Drugs Act 1975 and the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1977.

Prescriptions

Veterinarians commonly dispense medicines on site at their surgeries and only occasionally need to write prescriptions. Veterinarians may:

- Only prescribe a prescription medicine for the treatment of an animal under their care (Regulation 39(3) of Medicines Regulations).
- Ask for a medicine to be compounded for the specific needs of an animal in their care, if there is no proprietary product available (Section 26 of the Medicines Act).
- *Not* prescribe unlicensed proprietary medicines under Section 29 of the Medicines Act. Only medical practitioners are able to do this.
- *Not* use a Practitioner Supply Order (PSO) to access human medicines for practice use.

Veterinarian prescriptions must comply with Regulation 41(j) of the Medicines Regulations and the prescription must:

- be legible and indelibly printed (or handwritten)
- be signed and dated personally by the prescriber with their usual signature (not a stamp)
- carry the address of the prescriber’s veterinarian practice
- set out the title, surname, initial of each given name, and the address of the owner of the animal/s
- contain the following statement or words of similar meaning: ‘not for human use’ or ‘for animal use only’
- describe the breed, sex and age of the animal/s to be treated

- indicate the name and strength of the medicine
- indicate the total amount of the medicine to be dispensed on one occasion, or on each occasion if more than one dispensing is required
- state if the medicine is to be administered by injection, or by insertion into any cavity of the body, or by swallowing and indicate the dose and frequency of the dose, OR state if the medicine is to be applied externally and indicate the method and frequency of use
- *Not* exceed three months' supply
- *Not* be dispensed on any occasion after six months have elapsed from the date the prescription was written.

Urgently required prescriptions can be communicated orally to a pharmacist known personally to the veterinarian and a written prescription must be provided to the pharmacist within seven days (Medicines Regulations 1984 clause 40A). Note, veterinarians are not authorised to dispense telephone prescriptions for controlled drugs.

Click [here](#) for the New Zealand Veterinary Association guidelines "Veterinary Authorising (Prescribing) and Dispensing" for more information.

Controlled drugs

Veterinarians do not have to write on the triplicate controlled drug prescription form, as the legislation requires that these are used only for prescribers of medicines intended for human use. However, they are still required to keep records.

- Veterinarians must still abide by the legislation in terms of what must be written (the contents) on a controlled drug prescription as per Regulation 29 of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations.
- Pseudoephedrine or ephedrine can only be prescribed with Ministerial Approval. If these controlled drugs are required, a veterinarian must first apply for and gain Ministerial Approval individually, per animal.
- Veterinarians may issue a prescription for a controlled drug in any quantity not greater than the quantity reasonably required for the treatment of the animal under their care for one month (30 days).

Labelling

The labelling of prescription medicines for veterinary use should include:

- The words 'For animal use only', or similar meaning.
- Title: Name of pet (e.g., Rover).
- Surname of the owner.
- First name: Breed of animal (e.g., Cat, Dog etc) of the owner (e.g., Dog of John).
- Instructions: Give Rover ...
- Address of the owner.

If the veterinarian is unknown to the pharmacist, their registration can be confirmed on the Veterinary Council website [here](#). Only veterinarians who have status of "Registered – Practising" can prescribe.

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