



Prescription Drugs

Everyone will need prescription drugs for their pet. All pets should be on heartworm preventive medicine and those medicines all require a prescription. In addition, most pets will have an illness at some point that requires medicine. Medications are necessary for good health.

What Requires a Prescription?

Certain drugs require a prescription. This is to ensure that they are used properly, because they are addictive, or their use needs to be monitored. The FDA (Food and Drug Administration) believes a doctor should decide if your pet needs this drug.

Caution: Federal law restricts this drug to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian.

Over the counter (OTC) drugs are ones that you can go into the store and buy anytime. The FDA has decided the average person can easily understand the directions for when and how to use them. This does **NOT** mean they are completely safe and free of side effects.

It is illegal for a veterinarian to give you a prescription or a drug requiring one without examining your pet. Most of the time, an exam needs to be once a year. Your veterinarian may also require an exam for some refills. It all depends on what the medicine is, if your pet needs to stay on it, and on how your pet's health has been.

Compounded Drugs

Your pet is a shark when it comes to giving pills – and that's the only way the medicine comes. Now what? Compounding comes to the rescue! This is a method to put the drug into a different form so that it works for your pet.

In some cases, the drug comes in a size that is too large for your teacup poodle, and it needs to be a smaller dose. In another case, you can't give a pill but you know Kitty will eat fish-flavored liquid. If your dog needs diethylstilbesterol (DES) to control urinary incontinence, it's no longer available. You have to have it compounded.

For many cats with an over active thyroid, the task of giving them a pill twice a day for the rest of their lives means they won't get their medicine. Have it compounded into a gel that you apply to the inside of your cat's ears. Instantly you now have an option that will work.

All of these compounded medicines require a prescription. You won't save money with compounded drugs, though. It takes time, special equipment, and training for your pharmacist to compound medicines. However, if you need these services, they can be a lifesaver.



Online Pharmacies



You have many options today if you want to order your pet's medicine online and medications may be cheaper from them. However, you need to be careful.

Some online pharmacies have sold counterfeit drugs. These are very difficult for you to detect.

If any pharmacy tells you they don't need a prescription, don't buy from them. Although it may be tempting, any pharmacy that doesn't follow this basic rule is cutting corners somewhere else as well.

Human Pharmacies

Many animal drugs have a human counterpart and the generic form is the same. Some pharmacies now carry animal drugs as well.

Be aware there are some drugs that human pharmacies don't carry unless they have the animal product. Some pain medicines are pet-only and are not used in human medicine. Dogs require thyroid medicine (levothyroxine) in a much higher dose than people do. Human pharmacies often won't have the dose your dog needs.

Your veterinarian may prescribe prednisolone (a steroid) but the pharmacy only carries prednisone. Prednisone must be converted to prednisolone in the liver. Cats don't make the conversion very readily so prednisone won't work. Unfortunately, we've had pharmacists just fill prednisone assuming it would work just as well.

Pharmacists can be confused about pet prescriptions. The thyroid medicine is a good example. Because the dose is so high compared to people, the pharmacist thinks the prescription is written wrong. They think 0.5 mg should actually be 0.05mg. They should call your vet if they aren't sure, but not all of them will.

Unfortunately, we've seen many mistakes from human pharmacies so we advise you to be very cautious. If you are getting your pet's medications at a human pharmacy, know the name and concentration for the drug you are supposed to get. Make sure the label matches exactly or ask why it's different.

Other Considerations

Be careful when buying drugs over the counter. Some that seem cheaper may not actually work well and end up being more expensive in the end. Flea medicines are a good example of this.

Another example is buying ear mite medicine when your pet is scratching its ears. Most of the time ear mites are not the cause of itchiness and you've wasted your money in addition to delaying treatment for your pet.

Some heartworm and flea product manufacturers will only guarantee their product if you purchase it from a veterinarian. Your vet may have coupons or rebates as well.

Loving Paws has an online pharmacy as an option for people who prefer that. It also ensures they are using a pharmacy that meets all standards. Products from our pharmacy carry manufacturer's guarantees and all rebates and coupons are available in addition to discounts the pharmacy offers.

