

# Veterinary medicines explained



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Common health problems and some diseases can affect both animals and humans. For example, pets can suffer from diabetes, epilepsy, cancer and arthritis and can have health issues such as dental problems, heart disease, allergies and food intolerances. Some infectious diseases can pass between animals and humans, so it is important that medicines are available for our pets just as they are for us.

A veterinary surgeon will prescribe the most suitable medicine to treat your pet's illness or health issue. When your pet is prescribed a medicine, your vet will make sure it is the right type, and they will tell you the right dose to give them, at the right time and for the right length of time. It is important that you use the medicine in line with the safety instructions on the label and that you follow your vet's advice. Often, after your pet has taken the course of medication, your vet will need to check them again to make sure they are better and the illness has been treated successfully. It is sometimes possible for a pet to have an unexpected reaction to a medicine and if you think this has happened, you must contact your vet. Some pets suffer from chronic illnesses and they cannot be cured. Your vet may be able to prescribe medication that can be taken over the long term to control your pet's illness.

## How to buy medicines safely

Veterinary practices stock an extensive range of medicines. This means that if your vet prescribes a medicine for your pet, you will be able to take the medicine home with you and start your pet's treatment straight away. If you prefer, you can ask your vet for a prescription for your pet, which you can take to a pharmacy. There is a cost for the prescription from your vet. Your vet can explain the advantages and disadvantages of asking for a prescription.

## Cost of medicines – safe and effective medicines come at a cost

Veterinary surgeons will always prescribe the medication that is best for your pet and is licensed for pets in the UK. Medicines are not cheap to produce and they must go through safety checks just as human medicines do. Animal medicines are typically tested for five years or more before the medicine is available and this costs many millions of pounds in investment. The price you pay for your pet's medicine has to cover the costs of researching, developing, producing and supplying the medicine.

## About the BVA

The BVA is the national representative body for the UK veterinary profession. We support our members to fulfil their roles for the benefit of animals and the public.

This is one of a series of leaflets for animal owners produced by the BVA, you can find more at [www.bva.co.uk/public](http://www.bva.co.uk/public)