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## YOUR REFERRAL VET

### Pain Relief Medication for Dogs & Cats

#### Why has my pet been prescribed pain killers?

It is well recognised that animals feel and experience pain.

Common reasons for animals being prescribed pain relief medications include:

- Short term (acute) pain management after surgery or dental extractions
- To manage painful medical conditions
- To manage painful injuries following trauma (e.g., motor vehicle accident, dog attack)
- To manage chronic pain (e.g., osteoarthritis, cancer pain)

The medications prescribed depend on the type of pain, intensity of pain, and the signalment (species, breed, age) of the pet.

#### My pet doesn't look painful, do I still need to give the medication?

As signs of pain can be difficult to recognise in animals it is important that you administer any pain relief medication that has been prescribed, even if it is not obvious to you that your pet is painful. However, if you notice adverse side effects, you should stop the medication and contact the clinic as soon as possible.

#### What if my pet appears to be in pain despite the medication?

Every animal is an individual and experiences pain differently, so it is possible that the medications prescribed may not be sufficient to manage your pet's pain. Ideally, you should assess your pet for signs of pain frequently during a course of pain killing medication. To assist, some simple pain assessment scales for dogs and cats can be found on our website. If you think the pain relief your pet has been administered is insufficient, please contact the clinic as soon as possible.

#### How do I administer the medication, and what side effects should I look out for?

General advice for the administration of pain relief medication:

- Use the dose has been prescribed. NEVER give a higher dose as this risks overdose. Only give a lower dose if your vet advises you to due to side effects.
- Use the dose frequency prescribed (e.g., once daily, twice daily, etc.). Giving drugs more frequently risks overdose, while administering less frequently than prescribed means your animal may experience pain as the previous dose wears off before the next is given.
- If you notice any side effects (see table on reverse), stop the medication, and immediately contact the clinic.

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Drug	Mechanism of action	How to administer	Side effects*	CAUTION
Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs): Carprofen, Meloxicam	Reduce inflammatory pain by blocking production of certain chemicals (prostaglandins) that cause inflammation and pain	These medications should be administered with food, never on an empty stomach.	Vomiting Diarrhoea Reduced appetite	Must be used with care in animals with kidney disease or coagulopathies (discuss with vet).  <b>NEVER</b> use NSAIDs made for human use (e.g., ibuprofen) as these are highly toxic to dogs and cats
Gabapentin ( <i>Neurontin</i> )	Blocks pain signals at calcium channels in the spinal cord. Particularly useful for nerve pain.	Can be given with or without food.	Sedation Diarrhoea Vomiting	
Tramadol ( <i>Tramal</i> )	Reduces pain by upregulating the body's own pain relief pathways (via serotonin and noradrenaline reuptake). May also block pain signals at opioid receptors in the nervous system.	Can be given with or without food.	Sedation Vomiting Reduced appetite Constipation	May not be very effective to reduce post-surgical pain in some dogs due to genetic differences in ability to metabolise the drug. Animal must be monitored for breakthrough pain.
Fentanyl (or buprenorphine) patch	Block pain signals at opioid receptors which are widespread in the nervous system.	Medication is administered through the skin via a transdermal patch. The patch is applied by your vet and will start to work ~12 - 24 hours after it is applied and lasts up to 3 days.	Sedation Dysphoria (behaviour changes) Vomiting Reduced appetite Constipation Difficulty urinating	<b>USE EXTREME CARE</b> around children and other animals: if the patch is ingested or licked a serious drug overdose could result, even after the patch is removed (e.g., after 3 days). Dispose of patches carefully (or ask your vet to remove for you).  Absorption varies between individual animals so may not provide adequate pain relief. Animal must be monitored for breakthrough pain.
Paracetamol ( <i>Panadol</i> )	Blocks nerve signals in the spinal cord and brain to reduce pain and fever.	Ideally, administer with food.	Vomiting Abdominal pain	<b>NEVER GIVE TO CATS.</b> Cats cannot metabolise paracetamol properly, resulting in a potentially fatal drug toxicity if paracetamol is administered.