

Steroids

Overview

- Steroids are a group of medicines that help with a range of conditions in pets. They are most commonly used for reducing inflammation and for problems with the immune system.
- Steroids are useful drugs that have many different actions on the body but should always be used with care because they have the potential to cause side effects, especially when given over a long period of time.
- Steroids can be given as injections, tablets, creams or drops.

Ordering medications during the pandemic

At the moment, your veterinary practice may need more time to process repeat prescription requests. Steroids should never be stopped suddenly so it's important to request more before you run out. If your pet has already run out of steroids, contact your vet ASAP.

Uses

Steroids have many different actions but are most commonly used for reducing inflammation (swelling) and managing the immune system.

They can be used to help treat a wide range of conditions including:

- Skin conditions
- Immune system disorders
- Inflammation
- Some cancers
- Some eye conditions

Side effects

Although steroids are very useful, and are commonly used for many different conditions, they are strong and can have side effects, especially if they are used incorrectly. Side effects can be worrying but they are often better than putting up with an unmanaged condition or a pet that is suffering. Your vet will

try to minimise side effects by prescribing the most suitable steroid at an appropriate dose.

Common side effects of steroids include:

- Increased thirst
- Increased hunger
- Low energy
- Panting

If steroids are used over a long period of time or at high doses, side effects often include:

- Weight gain
- Muscle weakness
- Fat redistribution (pot belly)
- Skin changes
- Behaviour changes

If you're worried about side effects, contact your vet for advice.

Steroids and other medications

Drug interactions are possible if another drug is given at the same time as steroids, so always talk to your vet about any new drugs if your pet is already being prescribed steroids.

When to contact your vet

Never use steroids without a prescription from your vet, they can be harmful if used incorrectly. Contact your vet if your pet has been prescribed steroids and is showing any of the side effects listed above. Never stop your pet's steroids unless your vet tells you to. If you run low or run out of steroid by accident it's very important to contact your vet ASAP.

Am I eligible for PDSA veterinary treatment?

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