



Maidstone Veterinary Clinic

Veterinary Surgeons: P.J. Warmerdam *BVSc, MRCVS* and Associates.
28 King Street Upper Hutt, Telephone (04) 5285-927, fax (04)5282-042

MEDICATING YOUR PET

mvwwork;ci4

Medications are an important part of your pet's recovery from an ailment or maintaining its health. It is important to ensure that your pet receives its medication as prescribed. Many perceived failures of treatments can be attributed to inadequate dosing of drugs that are adequate to control or cure the condition your pet is suffering from.

If your Veterinarian has prescribed oral medication for your pet a few simple tricks may come in handy to aid in that administration. Below are a list of suggestions for getting medication into cats and dogs.

1. Do Not Crush tablets (unless unavoidable). Many tablets are bitter or distasteful. A tablet that is powdered and then spread into the food may have the affect of putting the animal off the whole meal.

A better option is to break the tablets into 1/4 or 1/8 segments. These can be mixed with food and are often missed by the patient. Mixing biscuits into tinned foods along with broken tablet segments is often helpful as the animal then won't easily recognise the texture of the tablet. Otherwise the animal will notice the tablet much as we would a bone when eating fish.

2. Hungry Animals often eat their food more greedily and may be less likely to notice small tablet fragments mixed into it. Feed the tablet first, in a small part of your pet's meal after a day of starvation (i.e. don't leave biscuits down during the day).

3. Palatable foods. Most animals have a favourite type of food or treat, tablets are less easily recognised when fed in these. Good examples include cooked chicken, sardines, salmon, balls of cheese, coatings of vegemite or butter, etc.

4. Whole tablet dosing is the most efficient method of medicating the patient.

The ease of this will depend on your pet's temperament, the help you have available and your skill at delivering the tablet properly over the back of the tongue. It is important to be assertive and let your pet realise that there may not be much choice but accepting your intentions. A hint for this method is to lift your pets head up so that its front limbs are still on the ground but it is staring up towards the sky. This will then cause the mouth to open and the lower jaw to drop. There will also be less strength in its mouth to resist your attempts. Place the tablet as far back on the tongue as possible, then firmly massage the throat, and up under the tongue (between the jaws) to induce swallowing, gentle stroking will not do this. You can usually tell a cat has swallowed a tablet when it licks its nose.



'Pill Popper' devices can be bought/used although these can be fiddly.

5. Liquid Medication. Some medications come in a paste or liquid form which can be helpful for those difficult animals. There is also the option of dissolving the medication into water and if needed a small syringe can be provided for dosing the tablet in liquid form. The tablet is powdered (or broken into segments) and placed in the syringe with a small amount of water. Leave it standing for a couple of minutes and then shake it to form a liquid suspension. This can then be used to dose the animal by elevating the head and introducing the nozzle of the syringe between the gap of teeth on the side of its mouth.

The suspension should be ‘injected’ smoothly but not too fast as it may cause coughing. For less palatable medication it may help adding chicken broth/stock or sardine oil to the syringe to disguise the taste.

6. Injections. A few medicines are available in injection form and some clients have been taught to inject their pets. These are often once a day preparations and can be of help in difficult animals that needed accurate and regular dosing.

Tricks especially for Cats.

7. Smearing the medication. Mixing the drug in butter/honey/caramel etc and plastering on the fur of one or both of the front paws. Most cats are very tidy and will clean this off the skin quite rapidly. It is not an ideal method of therapy as the dosing may be less accurate and sick cats may not be grooming themselves.

8. Restraining cats: angry cats can sometimes be subdued and controlled by wrapping them in a towel so that their legs are bound while leaving only the head free, always remember that minimal and gentle restraint is most effective. Fighting a cat WILL NOT WORK as their level of excitement will only increase to one that may be dangerous for both owner and patient alike. You can also try the “clothes pegs” technique by applying 3 pegs to the skin on the back of the cats neck. This has the same sedating effect as if the cat was still a kitten and being carried around by its mum by the scruff of the neck.

Tricks especially for Dogs.

9. Dogs are often easier to medicate than cats and if problems arise you can try section 7) and also try peanut butter. Because dogs are mostly trained (to some degree or other), part of their initial training should also focus on the acceptance of things and hands into its mouth from its owner. It is often better to start this whilst the dog is still young and weighing 5kg than to wait till it is 2yrs old and weighs 45kg.

10. If all else fails... get the vet to medicate your pet. The medication has been supplied for a reason. It is very important your pet gets the full dose at the times prescribed or else the treatment will fail. In some situations it may even mean that your pet may have to board at the clinic for a few days.