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From: lissa [lissa@lissa.net]
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To: ExtMAGDRL@yahoogroups.com
Subject: [ExtMAGDRL] DOE Topic #6: Prescription Drugs for Canine Arthritis

Hi All,

As the weather gets colder, we Dane owners may notice our pups getting up/down more slowly, especially those that are older or have been injured. If your vet diagnoses arthritis, there are many prescription alternatives commonly prescribed for dogs, but some have unpleasant side-effects.

I came across the article below that discusses common arthritis meds and their side effects (excerpted to remove marketing data.) Sharing with everyone as this week's Dog Owner Education topic #6.

Excerpted from: Painkillers Give Arthritic Dogs A New Leash On Life
By Steve Dale (link to full text article below.)

Vets no longer tell their canine clientele, "Take two aspirin and call me in the morning." Aspirin and steroids were painkillers of choice to ease the formidable pain created by hip and/or elbow dysplasia, and osteoarthritis, but long-term usage caused problems including butchering gastrointestinal systems.

In 1997, Rimadyl came to the rescue as the first in a line of alternatives to alleviate pain associated with osteoarthritis. While veterinarians were discussing the possible merits at conferences, a desperate public clamored for the drug. Vets had difficulties keeping stock of the pills. Rimadyl was an incessant topic of chat room discussions on the Internet and when dog owners met on the street or in parks, everyone was talking Rimadyl.

No surprise, it didn't take long for various other pain relief medications to storm the market, Adequan Canine, Cosequin and most recently EtoGesic Tablets among them.

"If consumers understand these medications are about relieving pain, and not relieving the disease - that's fine," says Dr. Claude Gendreau, an American Veterinary Medical Association Board Certified Orthopedist from Riverwoods, Ill. "These products don't cure dysplasia or osteoarthritis."

The good news is that the products do work for many pets, in some case, may even work miracles. Hundreds - who knows, maybe even in excess of one thousand dogs - who otherwise might have been euthanized as the only relief for crippling, chronic pain - now have a new lease on life. You can't emphasize that statement enough.

While the new pain relievers have revolutionized veterinary medicine, much remains unclear about their effectiveness, including potential long-term side effects, and under what circumstances which pets are most likely to benefit. On some dogs some of these products may have little or no effect. And none of these medications come cheap.

The following is a basic guide to the most popular of these products for dogs. Budsberg and Gendreau explain what is known about how the medications work, what the side effects may be, and for which dogs there is the greater

likelihood of easing suffering. Armed with this information, you'll understand loads more than what the ads tell you, and you'll be able to discuss with your vet what the right choice(s) may be for your pooch.

-- Adequan Canine: Unlike drugs that only treat the symptoms of arthritis, Adequan Canine claims to alter the destructive cycle of the disease itself. It's unclear exactly at what extent the product is able to do this, but it seems to only be able to slow down the progression of early osteoarthritis. Presumably Adequan offers ingredients to assist cartilage to re-build after breakdown, and inactivates "bad" enzymes that destroy cartilage.

However, when the disease has fully progressed, the drug may be less effective. For this reason, current thinking is that younger dogs who haven't fully developed the disease are the best candidates for Adequan.

Adequan is an injectable to be administered twice weekly for four weeks. The good news and bad news is that clients must have the product given as a "shot" by their vet. This means the vet can regularly observe the dog. However, in the real world, visiting a vet twice weekly may not be convenient, or even an option. There are no known side effects to Adequan Canine.

-- Cosequin: This is a nutraceutical, falling somewhere between a pharmaceutical and nutritional supplement. It is the only product listed here that is not FDA approved, and it is the most controversial of the pack. Some vets refuse to prescribe Cosequin pills, calling it a waste of money; other vets do consider this a serious alternative for pain relief and have witnessed amazing results.

The primary ingredients in Cosequin are Glucosamine/Chondroitin Sulfate. People with arthritis also use Glucosamine, which can be found at health food stores, and the results vary among people too.

The theory goes something like this: Cosequin provides building blocks for cartilage. Current thinking for those who believe Cosequin can be effective is to put a dog on Cosequin long-term to hopefully slow the degenerative process, while using a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (Rimadyl or EtoGesic Tablets) as needed when there's a flare-up creating pain.

Bottom line: Hard evidence - meaning scientific documentation - is most suspect for this product. Generally, side effects have not been reported.

-- Rimadyl and EtoGesic Tablets: They are two separate drugs, but each has much in common. They are both non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. Both drugs are related to aspirin, but tend to be kinder and gentler to canine tummies. Both these products claim to halt the production of prostra glandin E2, a normally produced substance that creates inflammatory response. By decreasing the inflammation, pain is resolved.

Some dogs do suffer stomach upset with Rimadyl, which is why EtoGesic may be an alternative, or visa versa. "One pill may work for one dog's body and not another dog," says Budsberg. "When it comes to non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, it's good to have choices." Additional choices are soon expected to enter the market.

Rimadyl recommends two pills daily, and EtoGesic one tablet daily. In some cases, EtoGesic may be moderately less expensive.

When Rimadyl first entered the scene, it was a hotly debated topic on the Internet. It still is. Now, there are entire web sites and online chats devoted to claims that Rimadyl is extremely dangerous. Gendreau and Budsberg concur Rimadyl is less dangerous to dogs than aspirin is to people. "The odds of positive results far outweighs any harmful effects," Budsberg says.

Although it occurs very rarely, Rimadyl may cause serious liver damage or kidney dysfunction in any kind any dog, but such problems seems to occur most often in Labrador retrievers. As a result, playing it safe legally, Rimadyl's manufacturer (Pfizer Animal Health) now recommends periodic liver enzyme tests for Labs on the drug. However, Budsberg says there's an inherent potential danger with any drug. While he isn't concerned about Rimadyl's safety, he admits there's still a great deal to be learned about long-term usage of any of these medications.

http://www.goodnewsforpets.com/petworld/archive/3b006_painkillers.htm

NOTE: Deramaxx, a commonly prescribed NSAID, is not covered in this article. Similar to Rimadyl, it has been associated with the following side effects in some dogs:

Stomach ulceration - even perforation and rupture of the stomach can occur. This is not only painful but life-threatening.

Platelet deactivation - platelets are the cells controlling the ability to clot blood and, as a general rule, it is preferable not to promote bleeding. We would prefer platelets to remain active and able to function should we need them.

Decreased blood supply to the kidney - this could tip a borderline patient in to kidney failure.

Next week I'll share information on holistic approaches to this ailment. Thanks for educating yourselves to benefit all dogs!

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"A dog is the only thing on earth that loves you more than he loves himself." - Josh Billings

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