

Pet Medication Choices – Helping to Insure Your Pet's Health

Provided by the Ohio Veterinary Medical Association



WHY DOES MY VETERINARIAN NEED TO SEE MY PET BEFORE WRITING OR FILLING A PRESCRIPTION MY PET HAS ALREADY BEEN ON BEFORE?

Both the law and sound medical judgment require that a veterinarian have what is known as a “veterinary-client-patient relationship” before prescribing and/or administering medication. Ohio Administrative Code (4741-1-05) specifically states that “A licensed veterinarian may prescribe, administer or dispense a drug or biologic only in those cases in which he or she has a valid veterinary-client-patient relationship.”

The law goes on to state in Ohio Revised Code (4741.04)¹ that this relationship between your pet, you and the veterinarian must have three conditions, including that the veterinarian has recently seen your animal.

A veterinarian is simply following the law when they tell you they cannot issue a prescription or medication if they have not recently examined your pet. Of course there may be medical reasons why this might not be in the best interest of your pet. For example, if your pet is given heartworm preventive without a test that might be necessary, it can be fatal to your animal.

When your veterinarian tells you they cannot authorize a prescription without first seeing your animal, either within the clinic or by responding to a faxed or called request from an internet or local pharmacy, they are simply following both the law and good medical judgment. Veterinarians base their medical decisions on what is best for your animal. If anyone tries to convince you otherwise, or attempts to harass a veterinarian into issuing a prescription that they are not comfortable giving, are they really looking out for the best interest of your pet?



1 “A) A veterinarian assumes responsibility for making clinical judgements regarding the health of a patient and the need for medical treatment, medical services, or both for the patient, and the client has agreed to follow the veterinarian’s instructions regarding the patient.

B) The veterinarian has sufficient knowledge of the patient to initiate at least a general or preliminary diagnosis of the medical condition of the patient. *In order to demonstrate that the veterinarian has sufficient knowledge, the veterinarian shall have seen the patient recently* and also shall be acquainted personally with the keeping and care of the patient by examining the patient or making medically appropriate and timely visits to the premises where the patient is kept.

C) The veterinarian is readily available for follow-up evaluation, or has arranged for emergency coverage, in the event the patient suffers adverse reactions to the treatment regimen or the regimen fails.”

DOES A VETERINARIAN HAVE TO PROVIDE ME WITH A PRESCRIPTION IF I DO NOT WANT TO HAVE IT FILLED IN THEIR CLINIC?

Ohio law does not require a veterinarian to provide a prescription to a client. For a variety of medical reasons, including the issue of follow-up care if there is an adverse reaction to medication purchased elsewhere, a veterinarian may not feel it appropriate to provide a prescription. This matter is about the proper care and well being of your pet. If this issue is important to you, you may want to check on the clinic’s policy before making the appointment with the veterinarian.

MY VETERINARIAN WILL PROVIDE ME WITH A WRITTEN PRESCRIPTION, BUT WILL NOT FAX A PRESCRIPTION INTO AN INTERNET PHARMACY I HAVE CHOSEN. WHY?



To insure that a prescription is properly adhered to and cannot be easily altered or reproduced without the veterinarian’s knowledge or consent, some veterinarians elect not to fax prescriptions. Instead, when the veterinarian provides a prescription on a prescription pad they are giving complete flexibility in having the prescription filled as you, the client, decide.

When a veterinarian questions a prescription request initiated by an outside pharmacy, or is concerned with honoring a prescription request to be sent by facsimile rather than as an original on a prescription pad, they are not violating the law or a code of professional conduct. A veterinarian is your pet’s health care professional who first and foremost is concerned with the medical circumstances when issuing any prescription.



WHAT ABOUT THE COST OF THE MEDICATIONS?

When comparing the cost of medications remember that your veterinarian will be there to answer questions, insure proper dosage, and should an adverse reaction occur, they will be there to take care of your pet.

These are just some of the issues you should consider when purchasing prescription medication. If you have cost concerns, discuss these concerns openly with your veterinarian so that choices can be made that will make sense for you and the well being of your pet.

Veterinarians receive years of medical training, are licensed, tested and participate in several hours of continuing education each year. They are committed health care professionals and are concerned first and foremost about the well being of your pet.

It is important that they have seen your animal recently in order to make safe, accurate and lawful decisions in providing medications and prescriptions. If you have concerns, talk them over with your doctor and remember that they too want your family's pet to be healthy, happy and receive the best care possible.

■ *The Ohio Veterinary Medical Association is a non-profit organization providing services to its members in the areas of continuing education, advocacy on public policy matters, and access to variety of professional resources. The OVMA represents over 2,400 veterinarians practicing in various fields and specialties. The organization has been serving its members and the public since 1884.*

The OVMA is governed by a twenty-eight member Board of Trustees. The work of the Board and its volunteer committees is guided by a Strategic plan and the organization's By-Laws. An organization dedicated to the advancement of its members, animal health, and the important role animals play in our lives, the OVMA's core purpose is to: Foster life-long learning, stewardship, compassion and community in veterinary medicine.



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