



WSAVA
Global Veterinary Community

Analgesic drug availability – Recommendations on minimum pharmacological need

World Small Animal Veterinary Association and Global Pain Council Position Statement

Pain is a common clinical occurrence in all species, including small domesticated animals. Whether part of an underlying illness, the result of an injury, or as a consequence of needed surgery/diagnostic test, its occurrence negatively impacts the health and welfare of animals it afflicts, causing needless suffering, and therefore its identification and resolution is a key feature of the Hippocratic and Veterinary Oath (<http://www.wsava.org/sites/default/files/WSAVA%20Veterinary%20Oath.pdf>). Fortunately, a variety of highly effective pharmaceutical agents have been developed; unfortunately, these are not always available for veterinary use – primarily due to licensing and regulatory issues. Where possible, every effort should be made to overcome these impediments to use to achieve the common goal of ethically meeting our responsibility as veterinary practitioners.

With respect to pain management, the following minimum requirements, would define the therapeutic options necessary to properly manage pain in small animals.

1. As opioids are critical for acute and moderate to severe pain management, veterinarians should have access to this class of analgesics. Ideally, this would include veterinary licensed opioids. However, where this is not possible, veterinarians should have regulatory discretion to use human licensed opioids in an extra-label fashion, ensuring all regulatory requirements regarding their use are met. Due to its common use in human medicine, as a minimum this should include morphine as it can be used for moderate to severe pain in both dogs and cats.
2. Nonsteroidal antiinflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are effective for varying types and degrees of pain and combine the synergistic effects of both analgesia and antiinflammatory activities. They are the foundation of treatment for many inflammatory conditions commonly afflicting aging dogs and cats (e.g., osteoarthritis). Many veterinary licensed NSAIDs exist and since their safety and efficacy profile is known, every effort should be made to ensure veterinarians have access to at least one in their region of practice. A list of veterinary licensed NSAIDs is provided as Appendix I.

3. Local anesthetics are highly cost-effective analgesics with a high therapeutic safety margin when used correctly and commonly available in most countries, although not always labelled for veterinary use. Where veterinary licensed products do not exist, veterinarians should have regulatory discretion to use human licensed local anesthetics in an extra-label fashion. Due to its common use in human medicine, as a minimum this should include lidocaine as has well-defined therapeutic protocols and administration techniques for dogs and cats.

4. There are a number of adjunctive analgesic products (e.g., ketamine, etc) and modalities that go beyond a “minimum required” list but can be extremely beneficial for the treatment of pain in a multi-modal clinical approach. One of the minimum requirements, already sited in the previous text, would be the regulatory discretion to use human-labelled product when no veterinary licensed product exists, information exists as to safe and effective product use, and all regulatory requirements over their storage and use are met.

Appendix I: NSAIDs licensed for veterinary use in various regions of the globe

- Carprofen
- Cimicoxib
- Deracoxib
- Etodalac
- Firocoxib
- Flunixin meglumine
- Ketoprofen
- Mavacoxib
- Meloxicam
- Pheylbutazone
- Robenacoxib
- Tepoxalin
- Tolfenamic acid

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