

## PET INTERNET DRUG PHARMACIES

The Food and Drug Administration has sent out a caution for pet owners about the potential dangers associated with purchasing drugs on the internet. Although, there are some reputable internet pharmacies, the FDA indicates that there are also some companies that are fronts for unscrupulous businesses. If you happen to unknowingly choose one of these illegal pharmacies, you could be purchasing products for your pets that are not approved by the FDA. While many of the unapproved products are considerably cheaper, they also may pose a health threat to pets and put their lives in danger.

The FDA regulates the manufacture and distribution of veterinary drugs, but the state boards of pharmacy regulate the dispensing of the products. However, there are foreign pharmacies that advertise veterinary prescription drugs to US citizens without a prescription. Another problem with on-line pharmacies is that they may not be selling drugs approved in the US. These products have different strengths and labeling than US products. Many drugs also need to be stored and handled in certain ways to maintain their potency. If you order these medications from the internet, you do not know if they have been stored and handled correctly, ex. refrigerated products. In shipping, the medications may not have been maintained at an optimum temperature and may have a decreased efficacy.

There are some internet pharmacies that indicate that they have veterinarians on staff who will sign a prescription for your pet. This is illegal. If the pharmacy is doing this illegally, can you really trust them to sell you a safe and effective product? A veterinarian must examine your pet to legally prescribe any prescription drug. Physical examinations provide the only means for a veterinarian to make a proper diagnosis and determine what therapy is required. The two most commonly prescribed drugs over the internet are pain medications for arthritis and heartworm preventatives. It is important for your pet's health that blood testing be performed before starting your pet on these medications. Also, dogs on arthritis medications should have blood checked routinely for side effects. Manufacturers of heartworm and other medications do not sell to internet pharmacies unless they are licensed and owned by a veterinarian. However, these pharmacies are few in number. A pet owner's own veterinarian is really the best source for obtaining heartworm medication. This way, if a dog or cat that is on heartworm medication contracts the disease, the manufacturer will work directly with the veterinarian. Please call us to set up an appointment for an examination and bloodwork prior to starting your animal on any medication.