



Navarro Small Animal Clinic

5009 Country Club Dr. Victoria, TX 77904 361-573-2491

www.navarrosmallanimalclinic.com

Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug Use In Pets

By: Dr. Shana Bohac

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) drugs are commonly used in both human and veterinary medicine to manage acute or chronic pain and inflammation in patients. Inflammation is the body's response to irritation or injury. It is typically characterized by redness, warmth, swelling, and pain. NSAIDs are drugs that block the chemicals that cause inflammation. There is a wide variety of veterinary approved NSAIDs used to control pain and inflammation associated with surgery, arthritis, injury, and illness.

Prior to any pet being prescribed an NSAID, your veterinarian will collect a thorough history of your pet's life and environment. A physical exam will be performed, as well as baseline bloodwork and urine analysis. Blood testing specifically checks the liver and kidneys for proper function. Glucose levels will also be evaluated, and if elevated can suggest diabetes. White blood cell levels are assessed to look for infection or other disease processes. Red blood cell levels are checked and if elevated may indicate dehydration, while low red blood cells indicate anemia. Another important value is platelets, which can indicate how well the blood is clotting. Performing these tests prior to starting NSAIDs will give you and your veterinarian peace of mind. Hidden illnesses can pose a health risk to your pet, particularly if paired with NSAID use. These results can also become part of your pet's medical records and provide a baseline for future reference.

The most common side effects seen with NSAID use include vomiting, diarrhea, anorexia, and lethargy. If at any time your pet starts showing these signs while on NSAIDs you should stop the medication immediately and contact your veterinarian. These drugs are highly associated with gastrointestinal ulceration and perforation, as well as liver and kidney toxicity. Patients at greatest risk for kidney toxicity are those that are dehydrated, on diuretics, and those that have pre-existing heart or kidney disease. It is also important to remember that NSAIDs should not be used with any other NSAID or corticosteroids.

Serious side effects can occur without warning; therefore it is important that you keep a close eye on your pet while they are on an NSAID. You will need to keep a close on the color of your pet's feces, appetite, water intake, and nausea or vomiting. If your pet is on long term anti-inflammatories then follow-up bloodwork should be performed every three to six months.

It is important to note that human anti-inflammatory medications are not safe for our pets. Ibuprofen has a very narrow margin of safety in dogs and can cause serious toxicosis in cats. Acetaminophen can be deadly in cats since they are unable to break down the drug. Always consult with your veterinarian prior to giving any over-the-counter medication to your pet.