

Compounding in the Exotic Practice

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Abstract

Compounding of medications for use in animals presents both benefits and concerns. Exotic animals are often too small or too difficult to medicate with drugs currently available in a Federal Drug Administration (FDA)-approved form. This article reviews current methods and problems for veterinarians who provide medications to exotic animals in forms not commercially available. Further research is required to establish standardized formulations to ensure accuracy, shelf life, and efficacy. Copyright 2006 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Key words: compounding; exotic; pharmacy; medications

Compounding of medications for use in animals presents both benefits and concerns. In some cases, the desired medication may not be available, or the strength or formulation does not lend itself to easy administration to the patient. Exotic animals present special medical challenges. These animals are often too small or too difficult to medicate with drugs currently available. As is the case with many situations, veterinarians must come up with the best possible solution. When presented with a need for a drug, first ensure that the medication is indeed not available in a Federal Drug Administration (FDA)-approved form that would work for your situation. Most of the medications used are not FDA-approved for the particular species or are only approved for human usage. Check your favorite veterinary or physician drug handbook for drugs, forms, and manufacturers. This will help in locating the drug, because many drugs can be ordered in the proper form from an accommodating pharmacy or distributor.

Assess your state laws, your state pharmacy board regulations, and your state veterinary board regulations regarding in-hospital compounding or the purchase and sale of previously compounded medications. There is no requirement for pharmacies to have any formal training or knowledge regarding compounding. This presents the very real possibility of complications resulting from improper drug levels or toxic by-

products. The veterinarian has the responsibility to ensure the drug made at these pharmacies is safe and efficacious. The prescribing veterinarian may be responsible for any problems arising from the use of these products. Pharmacists can pay a fee to become a member of the Professional Compounding Centers of America, which provides access to the Professional Compounding Centers of America consulting department containing technical support, proper supplies and bulk drugs, and continuing education including hands-on laboratories. However, this is not always a guarantee of accuracy, potency, and safety of the compounded product.

"First, do no harm," applies to many of the choices we make when treating avian/exotic animal patients. Many veterinarians began compounding certain medications when they became frustrated with the inconsistencies of compounded medications from pharmacies that advertised the service. When the medication does not suspend evenly and is

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Figure 1. Thirty-unit B-D brand syringe with needle removed.



Figure 2. Small containers for dispensing volumes of 1.0 to 7.0 mL.

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