

The risks of purchasing prescriptions on-line

- The drug manufacturer may not guarantee the medication if a problem arises.
- Some medications may contain foreign drugs that may not have the same quality and purity assurance as U.S. drugs. It is generally illegal to dispense foreign drugs in the United States, including foreign versions of U.S. products.
- Some medications may be imitations of approved drugs, and contain incorrect drug amounts. Studies of imitation drugs have found active drug amounts in a 100 mg pill to vary from 5 mg to 200 mg!
- Many medications must be kept in a controlled environment or refrigerated to ensure potency and effectiveness. You don't know what happened to your pet's medication on the delivery truck from the Internet pharmacy.
- Selling prescription drugs directly to owners without valid prescriptions may pose a health risk to patients and is illegal.



Medication prescribed and purchased at your veterinarian's office comes with the comfort of knowing that you and your pet have distinct needs that can best be served within your local community by your veterinarian.

Whom do I call if I have questions?

Talk with your veterinarian or call the Colorado Veterinary Medical Association if you have further questions about Internet pharmacies.

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Internet Pharmacies

The potential risks and limitations of buying drugs on-line



Colorado Veterinary
Medical Association

Internet Pharmacies

The Internet is easy and convenient, and even offers on-line pharmacies where you can obtain medications for your pet or animal. If you are considering purchasing medications on-line it is important for you to understand:

- Your veterinarian knows your pet and your family personally, and is familiar with your pet's specific needs and the environment where you live.
- Each animal is a different and unique individual. Some breeds and species have special needs or sensitivities. Dogs and cats are different – some medications that are administered to dogs are not safe (even fatal) for cats. Your veterinarian is aware of these differences, allowing him or her to select the product best suited to your pet.
- There are many medications that should not be given to your pet until your veterinarian determines they are safe to be administered. For example, heartworm medication should not be provided to dogs with active heartworm infections because it can lead to a fatal reaction. Therefore it is important to consult your veterinarian before administering any medication.

- Medications shipped to your veterinarian are properly packaged, delivered and stored under controlled conditions to avoid temperature extremes, sunlight and moisture, thus ensuring that the safety and efficacy of medications and vaccines is not compromised.
- Some medications require follow-up monitoring for adverse reactions or dosage adjustments. An adjustment to the dosage may need to be made after laboratory test and/or examinations are performed. For example, many arthritis medications require periodic monitoring of vital organ function. If an adverse reaction does occur, it is important to have established a veterinarian-client-patient relationship to ensure that your pet receives appropriate and timely medical attention.
- You should verify that an Internet pharmacy is properly licensed with the Colorado Board of Pharmacy (go to www.dora.state.co.us/pharmacy/Index.htm and click on Automated License Verification).
- Some pharmacies will try to sell pirated or unapproved "knock-off" drugs (imitations of FDA-approved drugs) to you. When ordering a whole bottle, be sure the original packaging is intact and look for a NADA (New Animal Drug Approval) number on the bottle.
- Be aware that at least two prominent Internet pharmacies selling veterinary medications have been investigated and consented to disciplinary action.

Warning signs of sub-standard Internet pharmacies

- If it does not ask for the name, address and telephone number of your pet's veterinarian.
- If it suggests you complete a health survey in place of your veterinarian's examination.
- If it offers to have a veterinarian on-line who has never examined your pet provide a prescription.
- If it does not have a physical address and telephone number.
- If it requires a waiver of rights before drugs are sent.
- If it says it is advisable to obtain a prescription medication from a foreign country via the Internet.

