The Veterinary Profession’s Role in Addressing the Opioid Epidemic

Ashley S. Morgan, DVM, CAE
Director, Division of State Advocacy
October 30, 2018
Outline

- What we’re hearing
- What we know
- What we’re doing
- PMPs and what doesn’t fit
- How we can work together
WORLD'S WORST PET OWNER CUTS DOG WITH RAZOR BLADES SO SHE CAN SCORE PAIN PILLS FROM VET

December 8, 2014 by Michelle Sigona

Police in Elizabethtown, KY say they arrested a woman for allegedly harming her pet dog to snag pain pills. Red flags went up after 23-year-old Heather Pereira's third visit to the animal doctor.

People are now maiming their pets to score drugs

By Richard Morgan

January 16, 2017 | 2:08pm

Shockling trend: Pet owners abusing their own animals to get drugs

Beth Warren, Louisville Courier Journal

Published 9:29 a.m. ET Aug. 27, 2018 | Updated 9:31 a.m. ET Aug. 27, 2018
US addicts harm their pets to obtain opioids

Boor Deng, Washington
August 29 2018, 12:01 am, The Times

Animals have become the latest victims in America's opioid epidemic as owners maim their pets deliberately so that they can get hold of painkillers.

In one case, a Kentucky woman used razor blades to cut her golden retriever three times in three months to obtain a prescription.

A survey of vets in Colorado found that 13 per cent had seen pet owners intentionally making their animal ill or injured to get access to opioids. In some cases owners frequently changed veterinarians, a practice known as “vet shopping”, so they could collect prescriptions from multiple sources.
Prescription Opioid Epidemic: Do Veterinarians Have a Dog in the Fight?

Derek S. Mason MPH, Liliana Tenney MPH, Peter W. Hellyer DVM, MS, DACVAA, and Lee S. Newman MD, MA, FACOEM, FCCP

[+] Author affiliations, information, and correspondence details

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FDA warns of pet owners using animals to get opioids

By Jacqueline Howard, CNN

Updated 4:55 AM ET, Thu August 16, 2018
What we know—
## Opioid Prescriptions from Veterinary Medicine Providers Dispensed in U.S. Retail Pharmacies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Prescriptions</td>
<td>412,782</td>
<td>520,606</td>
<td>613,603</td>
<td>711,884</td>
<td>776,045</td>
<td>728,223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of all opioid prescriptions</td>
<td>0.15%</td>
<td>0.19%</td>
<td>0.23%</td>
<td>0.29%</td>
<td>0.33%</td>
<td>0.34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IQVIA National Prescription Audit. Data Extracted January 31, 2018
What we’re doing—
Opioid Resources for Veterinarians

Veterinarians are concerned that the United States is in the midst of an opioid crisis and want to contribute actively to solving this problem. AVMA members can use the resources on this page to navigate the unique challenges posed by human opioid abuse, while still providing the best possible care for our animal patients.

Veterinarians prescribe or dispense opioids for very limited uses, but know it is critical for certain animals to receive these medications. Though our animal patients are not the ones struggling with opioid addiction, concerns about diversion are too-of-mind for the veterinary profession. Veterinarians already follow thoughtful steps that promote the responsible use of opioids and aim to avoid unintended consequences. These steps include meticulous record-keeping and control of opioids, as well as a multi-modal approach to patient care that uses not only pharmaceuticals, but also other interventions to effectively manage pain.

While conveying the veterinary profession’s desire to partner in an effective strategy to fight opioid abuse, the AVMA works with lawmakers and regulators to protect veterinarians’ ability to access, prescribe, and dispense opioids without compromising patient care. This means ensuring that expanded restrictions and other proposed solutions to managing opioid abuse support the ability of veterinarians to appropriately care for our patients.

The following materials will support AVMA members in complying with reporting requirements, understanding continuing education needs, and preventing drug diversion. We will continue to identify and develop additional resources to assist our members.

Opioid resources for AVMA members

State-by-state PDMP Chart: This chart summarizes state laws and regulations, and shows the extent to which veterinarians are required to participate in prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMPs), including requirements for reporting and searching state PDMP databases if applicable.

State-by-state CE Chart: This chart summarizes state laws and regulations defining veterinary continuing education requirements, including specific provisions related to opioids or other controlled substances.

Vet Shopping and Drug Diversion: This printable resource can be used in the back office of your clinic to help identify “vet shoppers” and combat drug diversion.

AVMA Policy – The Veterinary Profession’s Role in Addressing the Opioid Epidemic: This policy spells out the objectives and efforts the AVMA supports to address the national opioid epidemic.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>CE Hours Required</th>
<th>Topic Restrictions</th>
<th>Mode Restrictions</th>
<th>Other Restrictions</th>
<th>Controlled Substances/Opioids</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>Each person who applies for renewal of a license as a veterinarian is required to complete 40 hours of continuing education (CE) relevant to the practice of veterinary medicine and surgery during the pre-renewal period.</td>
<td>60 Ill. Adm. Code 1500.25 + 720 ILCS 570/315.5</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>CE credit hours used to satisfy this requirement may be achieved through self-study courses offered by an approved provider. CE course credit will be allowed for actual authorship of published articles and books, provided the subject matter of such article or book complies with this Section. CE course credit shall be allowed for actual time spent in writing or researching.</td>
<td>A licensee who serves as an instructor, speaker or discussion leader of an approved program will be allowed CE course credit for practical presentation time, plus actual preparation time of up to 2 hours for each hour of presentation. Time shall not be allowed for repetitious presentations of the same course. Every prescriber who is licensed to prescribe controlled substances shall complete 3 hours of continuing education on safe opioid prescribing practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>A veterinarian licensed in Indiana is required to complete forty (40) clock hours of continuing education derived from self-study will be accepted as renewal credit under the following conditions.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Continuing education derived from self-study will be accepted as renewal credit under the following conditions.</td>
<td>Beginning July 1, 2019, a licensed veterinarian is required to complete 2 hours of continuing education, during the previous 2 years, on opioid prescribing and abuse.</td>
<td>The course is of sufficient length to provide a substantial educational experience. A course of less duration is not acceptable.</td>
</tr>
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**OPIOID ABUSE: Best Practices for your practice!**

by MDVMA | Feb 7, 2018 | CE Events, News |

**WHEN:** Wednesday, February 28, 2018
**TIME:** 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
**WHERE:** Dept. of Agriculture, 50 Harry S. Truman Pkwy, Annapolis, MD 21401

2 CE Hours

Please join the MDVMA Forum for a panel discussion:

- The Opioid Epidemic
- Best Practices for Handling and Dispensing Controlled Substances
- The Do’s and Don’ts of Drug Logs
- Heroin and Opioids 101
- Q&A

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**Preventing Drug Diversion in Veterinary Hospitals**

*brought to you by the OVMA Opioid Diversion Awareness Task Force*
“Vet shopping” refers to the practice of soliciting multiple veterinarians under false pretenses to obtain prescriptions for controlled substances. Drug diversion is the illegal distribution or abuse of prescription drugs.

**HOW TO RECOGNIZE A VET SHOPPER**

- New clients bringing in seriously injured animals with vague histories
- Old, incomplete, or missing veterinary care records
- Describing clinical signs that are inconsistent with findings on examination of the patient
- Describing clinical signs that require specific medications
- Requesting medications by name (e.g., Tramadol or Xanax)
- Refusing medications as prescribed and suggesting alternatives
- Requesting early refills of medication
- Claiming medications were lost or stolen
- Requesting refills, while missing appointments
- Uncooperative and aggressive behavior

**WAYS TO MINIMIZE DRUG DIVERSION**

- Be thorough about documentation when using or prescribing narcotics
- Restrict access to prescription pads
- Maintain strict refill policies
- Remind clients to turn in unused portions of medications to a controlled substance disposal location
- Minimize the use of commonly abused drugs, if possible
- Strictly control access, and regularly check inventory
- Look for signs of animal abuse during physical exams
- Contact police if you see suspicious behavior

For more information visit: AVMA.org/opioids
The Opioid Epidemic: What Veterinarians Need to Know

The epidemic of opioid abuse is affecting medical and health professionals such as physicians and pharmacists, but also veterinarians.

Prescription opioids are powerful pain-reducing medications that include oxycodone, hydrocodone, and morphine, among others, and they have both benefits as well as potentially serious risks, such as addiction, abuse, and overdose.

While opioids are a small part of the veterinarian’s medical arsenal for treating pain in animals, stocking and administering these drugs also makes it important for veterinarians to understand how they can help combat the abuse and misuse of pain medications.

So what steps can veterinarians take if they stock and administer opioids?

1. Follow All State Regulations on Prescribing Opioids

2. Follow All Federal Regulations on Prescribing Opioids

3. Use Alternatives to Opioids

4. Educate Pet Owners on Safe Storage and Disposal of Opioids

5. Know What to Do If a Pet Overdoses on Fentanyl or Other Opioids

6. Have a Safety Plan and Know the Signs of Opioid Abuse

Veterinarians should have a safety plan in the event they encounter a situation involving opioid diversion or clients seeking opioids under the guise of treating their pets. Local police departments can advise veterinarians about what to do in these situations. The Fairfax County Police Department in Virginia, for example, has released a brochure for veterinarians about “veterinarian shopping” and preventing diversion of controlled substances.
How to recognize a veterinarian shopper?

- New patients bringing in seriously injured animals.
- Old, incomplete or missing veterinary care records.
- Describing symptoms that are inconsistent with the exam.
- Describing signs and symptoms requiring specific medications.
- Requesting medications by name (like Tramadol or Xanax).
- Refusing specific medications.
- Requesting early refills of medication.
- Claiming medications were lost or stolen.
- Requesting refills while missing appointments.
- Aggressive pet owners.

Practices to minimize drug diversion:

- Thorough documentation when prescribing narcotics.
- Protecting access to prescription pads.
- Maintaining strict refill policies.
- Asking patients to return unused portions of ineffective medication.
- Minimizing the use of medication often used to treat people.
- Looking for signs of abuse during physical examinations.
- Contacting police when veterinarians see suspicious behavior.

Documented case in Fairfax County: (Summer of 2016)

Dog owner brought his ten-year-old Boxer to six different veterinarians for treatment.

Dog owner reported the following symptoms:
- Separation anxiety
- Fear of thunderstorms
- Chewing trim of flooring
- Urinating on pillows

Pet owner also reported that the dog was in pain from a dislocated kneecap.

Owner received Xanax and Tramadol from multiple veterinarians during the same period of time. He also received early refills. The owner was charged with Prescription Fraud.
Educating the Public

- 23 television interviews reaching 1 million+ viewers
- Radio spot
Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs
And what doesn’t fit—

• Querying the system
• Animal identification
• Owner identification
• Veterinary identifiers
• Electronic prescribing
• Electronic reporting
Where we need help—
Points for Discussion

• Research
• Reporting drug shoppers
• Most appropriate application of PDMPs
• Labeling of medications
• Take-back programs and disposal
Working Together

• What are you hearing and seeing?
• What do you need?
• How can we work together?
• What should veterinarians do when they suspect someone is “drug shopping”? 
veterinary shopping and drug diversion

A GUIDE FOR VETERINARIANS

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3. Use Alternatives to Opioids

4. Educate Pet Owners on Safe Storage and Disposal of Opioids

Pet owners may be unaware that pet opioid prescriptions in the home pose a risk for accidental or intentional misuse by family members or guests. Whenever pets are actively receiving opioids, veterinarians should advise pet owners to secure the opioids and store them out of sight. When the pet owner has unwanted opioids, disposing of the medication should be a priority. Because of their inherent risks, FDA has specific recommendations for opioid disposal.

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How do you know if a client or employee may be abusing opioids?

While these may all be ordinary occurrences, some warning signs that a client is potentially abusing opioids may include:

- Suspect injuries in a new patient
- Asking for specific medications by name
- Asking for refills for lost or stolen medications
- Pet owner is insistent in their request

Some warning signs that veterinary staff may be abusing opioids include:

- Mood swings, anxiety, or depression
- Mental confusion and an inability to concentrate
- Making frequent mistakes at work
- Not showing up for work

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Contact Us

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