

**W**henever your pet needs prescription medicines, your veterinarian is your best, most reliable source.

Because your veterinarian:

- physically examined your pet and knows your pet's medical and treatment history
- knows which medicines are safest for your pet
- **educates you about potential side effects associated with your pet's medicines**
- shows you how to properly use the medicines prescribed for your pet
- stores prescription medicines in the clinic according to label directions
- uses current, unexpired medicines

For additional information, visit the following sites:

**THE U.S. FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION**

<http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/default.htm>

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOARDS OF PHARMACY**

<http://www.nabp.net>

**AMERICAN VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION**

<http://www.avma.org/issues/prescribing/default.asp>



FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine  
US Department of Health and Human Services



# ONLINE PET PHARMACIES

Protect Yourself and Your Pet:  
Be

# A . W . A . R . E .

**I**f you've ever searched online for prescription pet medicines, you've no doubt seen eye-catching, attention-grabbing claims. They sound convincing in their promises of convenience and lower prices. But are these claims really true?



**“Affordable pet prescriptions!”**

**“No prescription required!”**

**“Pet meds at discount prices!”**

*“Your best source for pet meds!”*

**I**nternet sites that sell pet drugs can be reputable pharmacies. However, others are fronts for businesses breaking Federal, State, and sometimes, International laws. Illegal online pharmacies may sell medicines that are counterfeit, outdated, mislabeled, incorrectly formulated, or improperly made or stored. These medicines may not contain the actual drug, or the correct amount of drug, may contain contaminants, may not work as well due to age or being stored in conditions that were too hot, cold, or humid, and may not have the proper directions for use. If you are unhappy with ordered products, illegal online pharmacies may fraudulently leave you with no way to get your money back. In the end, you may find buying prescription pet medicines online costly to your pet's health and your wallet.

If you find a cheaper medicine online, ask your veterinarian to consider matching the price. Many veterinarians are willing to competitively charge based on the online price you've found (and can show proof of). You should also know that neither the drug maker nor your veterinarian will stand behind a product's guarantee if you purchase the product online.

If you still want to purchase your pet's prescription medicines online, remember there is no fool-proof way to tell if an online pharmacy is legal. However, you can protect yourself by doing your homework and being online pharmacy A.W.A.R.E.

### **A— Ask Your Veterinarian**

Before you purchase online, talk with your veterinarian! Your veterinarian supports you

and wants what's best for both you and your pet. Ask your veterinarian questions, like “Do you trust the internet pharmacy site?” “Have you ever worked with the company?” “Have other clients used that site?” If so, what were their experiences?

### **W—Watch for Red Flags**

When buying from online pharmacies, keep an eye out for red flags. Be careful if the ...

- Site does not require veterinary prescriptions for prescription drug orders. *Websites that sell prescription veterinary medicines without valid veterinary prescriptions for them are breaking the law. Under the Federal Food Drug and Cosmetic Act, a pharmacy can't sell you a veterinary prescription drug without a valid prescription or other type of order from a licensed veterinarian. Online questionnaires or consults don't take the place of valid veterinary prescriptions. Sites that sell drugs without requiring valid veterinary prescriptions rob both you and your pet of the protection provided by a veterinary physical exam.*
- Site has no licensed pharmacist available to answer questions. *Can someone answer your questions about your pet's medicines?*
- Site does not list physical business address, phone number, or other contact information. *If something goes wrong with your order, can you get in contact with them?*
- Site is not based in the US. *If an out-of-country site fraudulently takes your money, there's not much the US government can do to help you get your money back.*

- Site is not licensed by the State Board of Pharmacy where the business is based. If the site operates in the US, check the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) website to see if the pharmacy is properly licensed: <http://www.nabp.net/index.html?target=/whoweare/boards3.asp&>.
- Site does not protect your personal information. *Keep yourself safe from identity theft! Make sure the site you use is secure.*
- Site's prices are dramatically lower than your veterinarian's or other website's prices. *If it seems too good to be true, then it probably is.*
- Site ships you medicine that you didn't order or that looks very different from what your pet normally takes. *Don't give these medicines to your pet! Contact the site immediately!*

### **A—Always Check for Site Accreditation**

In addition to following Federal and State licensing and inspection requirements, in 2009, the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) created a voluntary accreditation program called **Vet-VIPPS** (Veterinary-Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites). Vet-VIPPS accredited online pharmacies:

- are appropriately licensed in each state where they ship drugs
- have successfully completed a 19-point review and online survey
- undergo yearly VIPPS review and re-accreditation
- undergo NABP on-site surveys every three years

Vet-VIPPS accredited pharmacies must also meet other strict criteria, including protecting patient confidentiality, quality assurance, and validity of prescription orders.

### **R—Report Problems and Suspicious Online Pharmacies**

If your pet has a problem with a medicine purchased online (for example, a reaction to the medicine or the medicine not working), first contact the medicine's maker. To

report adverse drug events directly to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM) call **1-800-FDA-VETS**. For a copy of the reporting form (FDA Form 1932a) and for more information on how to report problems, visit the following website:

<http://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/SafetyHealth/ReportaProblem/ucm055305.htm>.

Protect yourself, your pets, and others! Don't fall victim to illegal online pharmacies. Report suspicious online pharmacy sites to FDA and NABP at:

FDA: <http://www.fda.gov/Safety/ReportaProblem/ucm059315.htm>

NABP: <http://www.nabp.net/>

### **E—Educate Yourself about Online Pharmacies**

The best defense you have against illegal online pharmacies is education. Do your homework and be online pharmacy A.W.A.R.E. before you purchase your pet's medicines online. **An informed consumer is an empowered consumer.**

For more information about purchasing pet medicines from online pharmacies, visit CVM's website at: [www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary](http://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary), or call CVM at 1-240-276-9300.

**A** -Ask your veterinarian

**W** -Watch for red flags

**A** -Always check for site accreditation

**R** -Report suspicious online pet pharmacies

**E** -Educate yourself about online pharmacies