

# Refilling Medications

- Remembering to refill prescriptions on time helps protect your pet's safety and health.
- Some veterinarians require 24 hours' notice for prescription refills, so be sure to allow enough time for your request to be processed.
- The best way to avoid running out of medication is to plan ahead and order refills on time.
- Despite our best efforts as pet owners, we sometimes forget to do things. However, whether you make a note on a calendar or arrange another reminder for yourself, it is important to make sure you remember to refill your pet's medications on time. Your pet's health and safety may depend on it!

## Why Do Pets Need Long-Term Medications?

Many illnesses in pets can require long-term administration of medication, including some very common medical conditions:

- Seizure disorders (such as epilepsy)
- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- Thyroid disease
- Arthritis

In most cases, long-term medication does not cure the disease, but it controls the clinical signs or has other effects that make the disease more manageable. In some cases, medications can control the signs of chronic illnesses so completely that pet owners sometimes mistakenly believe their pet has been cured and discontinue the medication, only to have the clinical signs reappear. If your pet is having problems or side effects from a medication, notify your veterinarian right away. But in general, you should always give medications as directed by your veterinarian and should not discontinue a medication unless advised to do so.

Long-term medications are not always used to treat illnesses; sometimes, they are given to prevent problems. For example, many veterinarians recommend year-round

administration of heartworm preventive medication and products that control fleas, ticks, and intestinal parasites.

## What Should I Do If I Run Out of Medication?

If you run out of medication, call your veterinarian right away. In some cases, your pet may be okay if a few doses of the medication are missed; your veterinarian can advise you about what steps to take in the meantime. However, missing even a few doses of insulin, for example, can cause serious problems for your pet. Similarly, certain medications (such as steroids) cannot be discontinued abruptly without causing illness.

It is important to make sure you remember to refill your pet's medications on time. Your pet's health and safety may depend on it!

## How Can I Avoid Running Out of Medication?

The best way to avoid running out of medication is to plan ahead and order refills on time!

Every person's life is different, so what works as a reminder for one family may not work for another. Here are some tips:

- **Ask your veterinarian if their office can send you reminders.** Many veterinarians have computer systems that can let them (and, more importantly, you) know when your pet's medications need to be refilled. Ask your veterinarian if their reminder system may work for you. In some cases, a phone call, e-mail, or postcard can serve as a reminder.
- **Find a creative way to remind yourself.** This may involve marking your calendar or sending yourself an e-mail reminder when it is time for a medication refill. Some pet owners link

## Home Care

medication refills to another regular event; for example, if there is a household duty that you perform monthly, use that event to remind yourself to also check your pet's medication or order a refill.

- ***Plan ahead if you are going to be traveling.*** Before you leave, check to be sure that you have enough of your pet's medication to last for the duration of your trip. If you will run out, leave plenty of time to pick up a refill from your veterinarian before you leave—don't just drop by on the way to the airport. If you are planning

an extended trip with your pet, you may need to have his or her medical records forwarded to a veterinarian at your new location so that medications can be dispensed when needed.

- ***Allow enough time for your veterinarian to refill your medication.*** Some veterinarians require 24 hours' notice to process prescription refills. Also, some medications must be specially formulated or ordered from an outside pharmacy. Make sure you know your practice's refill policy, and allow enough time for prescription refills to be processed.