



# PET TALK

Volume 07, Number 03

American College of Veterinary Pharmacists

## FDA APPROVES FIRST INSULIN DRUG FOR DIABETIC DOGS

In a May 4, 2004 press release, the FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine announced the approval of the first insulin drug for diabetic dogs. According to the press release, the only treatment that could be used on diabetic dogs prior to this approval was human insulin, which is less compatible with a dog's metabolic system.

The FDA estimates that one in every 200 dogs will develop diabetes. It is reported that the onset occurs in dogs aged 7-9 years, and seems to be twice as prevalent in females as in males.

Acting FDA Commissioner Dr. Lester M. Crawford states, "This is a very positive development for millions of American dog owners and their pets. It promises to improve the quality of life of dogs who suffer

from this debilitating disease."

The product will be marketed under the trade name "Vetsulin" by its developer Intervet, Inc. of Millsboro, Delaware, and will be available under a veterinarian's prescription.

The treatment will be used to treat the signs of diabetes in dogs such as excessive thirst, excessive urination, excessive appetite, and weight loss despite good appetite.

Veterinarians will determine the initial treatment dose based on the dog's weight, and then will use various tests to adjust the dosage to the optimum level.

Maintenance administration of the insulin may be done in the home. Dog owners will be provided instructions on how to

treat their dogs at home with the insulin. An information sheet that outlines the risks and benefits of treatment will also be provided.

Among the risks dog owners may face is hypoglycemia (dangerously low blood sugar) if they accidentally inject themselves with the insulin. The product contains warning statements on the label about this risk as well as others such as the need to prevent eye exposure to the insulin.

Vetsulin has already been approved in 20 countries, including the United Kingdom, and should be available in the United States in late summer 2004.

*From the May 4, 2004 FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine press release "FDA Approves First Insulin Drug for Diabetic Dogs."*

## DID YOU KNOW...

According to the *U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook* published by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA):

- There are more than 60 million pet dogs in the U.S. and nearly 70 million cats.

- The average dog visits its veterinarian almost twice as many times as the average cat or horse.
- Birds represented 2 million visits to veterinarians in 2001.
- Dog owning households spent 38% more in 2001 than they did in 1996.

This Newsletter is provided to you by:

*Matthew H. Kopacki, RPh*  
Rock Ridge Pharmacy  
191 Rock Road  
Glen Rock NJ 07452  
Phone: 201-444-4190  
Fax: 201-444-2698

# PET DENTAL HEALTH

Even though National Pet Dental Health Month was in February, it is always time to be concerned with our pet's dental health.

According to Gail C. Golab, DVM, PhD, more than 85% of dogs and cats that are at least four years old have periodontal disease, a condition in which bacteria attack the soft gum tissue.

Dr. Golab notes that periodontal disease is the final stage in a process that begins with the development of plaque on pets' teeth. Plaque is a substance that forms when bacteria multiply on the teeth and gums. Plaque mixes with saliva, hardens, and becomes the substances known as tartar and calculus. Bacteria, plaque, tartar and calculus irritate the gums, which become tender, red, and swollen. This stage of dental disease is called gingivitis.

Eventually, inflamed gums separate from the teeth, creating pockets that can trap more bacteria. Dr. Golab also notes that these pockets may deepen, causing bacteria to attack the roots of the teeth and bony tissue of the jaw causing teeth to loosen, gums to bleed, mouth odor, and pain when your pet eats. This is considered full-blown periodontal disease.

Dr. Golab goes on to state that bacteria from the teeth and gums can enter the blood stream and may travel to major organs and begin infection there.

The organs most often affected include the lungs, heart, kidneys, and liver. Parts of the nervous system may be affected as well. While these infections are usually treatable when caught at an early stage, they can cause serious damage to these organs, and if not caught in time, may be fatal.

Dr. Golab provides a 3-step recommendation for the prevention and treatment of periodontal disease, which includes professional veterinary dental care and good dental care at home.

### ***Step 1. Visit your Veterinarian***

In addition to a physical examination and medical history, the doctor will examine your pet's teeth and gums. Recommendations may be made for cleaning, polishing, and other dental care in the hospital, or your veterinarian may suggest a program of home dental care.

### ***Step 2. Professional Dental Care***

If your pet already has evidence of periodontal disease, a professional cleaning is in order. Depending on your pet's age and physical condition, the doctor may request that blood analysis, radiography, or other diagnostic tests be performed to evaluate the heart, liver, and kidneys for coexisting disease before proceeding with general anesthesia.

Once your pet is under anesthesia, accumulated tartar and calculus is removed by ultrasonic and hand scaling. Teeth needing fillings or root canals can be repaired and teeth that are beyond repair can be extracted.

Finally, the teeth are polished to slow down the formation of new plaque, tartar, and calculus. If there is evidence of major bone loss or another serious oral condition, your veterinarian may refer you to a veterinary dental specialist.

### ***Step 3. Dental Care at Home***

For cats and dogs, regular brushing is an important part of any preventative dental program. A special toothbrush and toothpaste for pets are recommended. Your veterinarian can show you the proper way to brush your pet's teeth.

Feeding your pet course-textured food may help prevent accumulation of plaque, tartar and calculus. Ask your veterinarian to advise you as to the best diet for your pet.

From "Dental Health," a *Paws for Pets* Feature by Gail C. Golab, DVM, PhD presented by the American Veterinary Medical Association on <http://www.avma.org/careforanimals.pawsforpets/dental.asp>.