WSAVA Launches First List of Essential Medicines for Cats and Dogs

In a global first, the World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) has launched a List of Essential Medicines for Cats and Dogs. Developed by the association’s Therapeutics Guidelines Group (TGG), the document aims to tackle difficulties that exist for companion animal veterinarians in many regions of the world in accessing vital veterinary medicines by supporting the availability of the drugs required for minimum standards of clinical practice.

The WSAVA List of Essential Medicines for Cats and Dogs includes both core and complementary essential medicines, listed alphabetically, either by drug category or organ system/specialty. It has been extensively peer-reviewed and will be updated every three years. The WSAVA believes it will enhance the standard of care that companion animal veterinarians worldwide offer to their patients while also facilitating the regulatory oversight of pharmaceuticals included on the List.

The WSAVA has been campaigning to resolve global inequalities in accessing veterinary medicines since a 2016 survey of its 113 companion animal veterinary member associations revealed that 75% of them faced obstacles in accessing medicines that restricted their ability to address the health and welfare needs of their patients. According to the WSAVA this is a long-standing issue that also affects veterinarians working with production animals and medical doctors.
In 2016, the WSAVA published two Position Statements to raise awareness of this problem, both of which were co-signed by many other international veterinary associations and trade bodies. In 2018, it created the Therapeutics Guidelines Group to lead its work in ensuring the adoption of best practices in selecting and using medicines and their responsible use in companion animals. The WSAVA List of Essential Medicines for Cats and Dogs is now available for free download from the WSAVA’s website: https://bit.ly/3aJAU0M

Commenting, Dr Paulo Steagall, Co-chair of the TGG, said: “Many of our global colleagues lack access to even essential drugs, such as opioid analgesics. This limits their ability to treat pain in their patients, leading to unnecessary suffering and compromising animal welfare. But it’s not just their patients that suffer. Our members and their colleagues experience deep frustration as they are unable to provide the standard of veterinary care they have been trained to deliver. For a profession already facing serious mental health problems, this is an unnecessary additional burden.

“The WSAVA List of Essential Medicines for Cats and Dogs is a major milestone in our efforts to support global drug availability and one that we believe will be helpful in making regulatory decisions around licensing, registration and approval. We believe it will also support pharmacovigilance and help to mitigate the effects of a growing market for counterfeit pharmaceutical products.”

WSAVA President Dr Shane Ryan added: “As a global association, committed to advancing the health and welfare of companion animals worldwide, resolving the long-standing problem so many of our members face in accessing fundamental medicines is one of our most important priorities. We congratulate members of our TGG who have worked very hard to produce this comprehensive resource which is the next step in our campaign to secure access for all veterinarians to the drugs they need to care for their patients.”
Note to editors:

The WSAVA represents more than 200,000 veterinarians worldwide through its 113 member associations and works to enhance standards of clinical care for companion animals. Its core activities include the development of WSAVA Global Guidelines in key areas of veterinary practice, including pain management, nutrition and vaccination, together with lobbying on important issues affecting companion animal care worldwide.

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Date of issue:

March 10, 2020