

## OPIOID MEDICATIONS AND YOUR PET

# KNOW THE FACTS

### An Opioid Crisis in the United States and in Iowa

- The U.S. is experiencing a public health emergency. In 2016, over 64,000 Americans died from a drug overdose, with a majority of these deaths occurring as a result of an opioid.
- In Iowa, opioid overdose deaths and treatment admissions for individuals with an opioid use disorder have tripled in the last decade.
- Individuals that misuse opioids are constantly looking for new ways to acquire opioids that may impact you.



Medication for **pets** is a source for persons with **opioid use disorder**

- People dependent on opioids may take the medication prescribed for a pet.
- Although we don't want to think anyone we care about misuses opioids, sometimes it happens.
- Be mindful of medications prescribed for your pet.
- Talk with your veterinarian about the medication being prescribed for your pet.

### When your pet is prescribed an opioid:

#### Prevent diversion and misuse

- Safely store opioid medication in a locked container or cabinet.
- Avoid leaving medication in plain view or where it can be easily accessed.
- Keep count of the medication to know whether any goes missing.



#### Do you have leftover medication?

- Promptly and properly dispose of any unused and expired opioid medications.
- Find a local take-back or pharmacy program to dispose of unused and expired opioids.
- Do not throw opioid medications in the trash or flush them down the drain.

If you are concerned about a family member or friend who uses opioid medication, help is available.

For more information, please go to [YourLifelowa.org](http://YourLifelowa.org).





# Safe Prescribing of Opioids for Pain and Reduction of Opioid Misuse

## Preventing Opioid Misuse and Diversion in Veterinary Practices

This E-blast from the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) focuses on informing veterinarians of safe prescribing practices for opioid medications, diversion prevention, and educating pet owners and handlers about the risks of opioid misuse.



The rapid increase in use of prescription opioids has resulted in a national crisis of opioid overdose deaths and opioid use disorder (OUD). Some people with OUD are now looking to their local veterinary clinic for such drugs. Incidents include individuals using their pets to obtain tramadol and ketamine for their own use. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), for example, reports that ketamine theft from veterinary clinics is common because of its hallucinogenic properties (Jackson, 2017).

In this environment, veterinarians must be proactive, conscientious practitioners of safe prescribing of opioids and other sedative medications. The following approaches and practices are relevant to addressing this problem:

- **Follow American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA, 2018) Guidelines for Veterinary Prescription Drugs and Iowa Board of Veterinary Medicine (2008) Standards of Practice.** These cover topics such as:
  - Making treatment decisions that are based on sound clinical judgment and current medical information and comply with federal, state, and local laws and regulations.
  - Properly labeling a prescription drug before dispensing.
  - Maintaining appropriate record keeping.
  - Dispensing drugs only in quantities required for the treatment of the animal.
  - Avoiding unlimited refills or other activity that may result in misuse of drugs.
  - Using drugs in accordance with its labeling.
  - Using a veterinarian–client–patient relationship agreement.
  - Reporting use and sale of a drug without a prescription to the state authority and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
- **Prevent Prescription Leftovers.**

Opioids prescribed for pets are a potential source of drugs for persons with OUD. Dispensing medication only in quantities required for the treatment of pets decreases the amount of leftovers that remain in people's homes and available for diversion. Avoid unlimited refills for opioids and require regular re-evaluations for chronic conditions before prescribing more in order to reduce leftovers and the misuse of the drugs.
- **Safe Dispensing, Storage, and Disposal of Opioid Medications.**

The diversion of opioid medications from their intended use is an ongoing problem that has fueled the opioid crisis. As prescribers and dispensers of these controlled substances, veterinarians can take steps to limit diversion through safe dispensing, storage and disposal practices at their facilities. These steps include:

- **Maintain strict inventory and dispensing records**
- **Store medications securely**
- **Dispose of medications properly**

