Veterinary Alert - Comfortis & Ivermectin Toxicity

2 December 2015

Comfortis (Spinosad) is a very effective monthly chewable tablet used for the prevention and treatment of flea infestation.

Ivermectin, commonly used "off-label" by greyhound trainers, is not registered for use in dogs. Other products registered for use in dogs contain ivermectin at lower dose rates, for example, Heartgard.

Elanco Animal Health has advised that dogs receiving off-label doses of ivermectin should not receive concurrent treatment with Comfortis (spinosad).

Neurological side effects consistent with ivermectin toxicity has been observed in dogs when ivermectin is co-administered with spinosad. There has been an awareness of this drug interaction since 2008 and sporadic cases of death have been reported over this time.

Affected dogs present with signs of ivermectin toxicity, in particular neurological signs of trembling, inability to stand and even seizures.

Never use ivermectin or its derivatives concurrently with Comfortis. Equimax (Albamycin) is often used “off label” for worming greyhounds. Albamycin is a member of the same chemical class as ivermectin and poses the same risk of toxicity.

If ivermectin is used off-label for worming or treating demodectic mange consider at least a six week delay after the use of Comfortis. Monthly use of ivermectin in greyhounds will not be conducive to the safe use of these two products in combination.

There are many registered products for the worming of greyhounds that may offer a safer and more effective alternative to the use of ivermectin.

Be very aware of the safety of insecticides and their combined use. They may be toxic to the liver and nervous system and can cause acute illness, fatality or chronic compromise to organ function. The use of products registered for use in dogs reduces these risks.

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