

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 25 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON ONE HEALTH

SUBJECT MATTER: Preserving Veterinary Access to and Use of Xylazine and
Other Alpha-2 Agonists

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Illicit xylazine and other alpha-2 agonists have increasingly been found mixed with fentanyl and other narcotic street drugs across the United States (US). This potent drug combination poses grave health and safety risks to humans. Because xylazine and alpha-2 agonists are not opioids, their profound sedative effects do not respond to the opioid-reversal drug naloxone, which complicates efforts of first responders and emergency physicians. Now the Administration, Congress, and Federal agencies are considering policy interventions to help stop the illicit supply. As policy is crafted to address this emerging public health threat, the veterinary community is concerned that new enforcement tools could severely impact the legal and responsible access to and use of xylazine and other alpha-2 antagonists by veterinarians and their clients.

Xylazine is a Federal Drug Administration-approved prescription animal sedative used to facilitate the safe handling and medical treatment of many species. It is particularly important for use when working with cattle, horses, wildlife, zoo, and research species. In cattle it is an essential drug for safety, given there are no practical alternatives for sedation. Additionally, xylazine can be reversed in veterinary patients, which helps prevent secondary injuries from prolonged sedation and allows them to quickly and safely re-enter the herd or the wild.

It is critical that any legislative or regulatory interventions to combat illicit xylazine and other

alpha-2 agonists, such as scheduling them as controlled drugs, also include safeguards to preserve access and responsible use of these prescription animal drugs for use by veterinarians and their clients. For manufacturers, xylazine is a low-volume, low-margin, generic animal drug. If the regulatory burden or required facility investments to comply with new policy are too high, the risk of manufacturers electing to discontinue production increases. Additionally, without federal policy and regulatory uniformity, states will continue to individually regulate xylazine, creating a patchwork of rules and regulations for manufacturers and distributors to navigate, increasing the likelihood for supply disruption.

Evidence is lacking that significant diversion of xylazine is occurring from US veterinary supply channels. Discussions between the American Veterinary Medical Association, the Administration, Federal agencies, and state law enforcement officials most commonly

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center on illicit manufacturing and importation of xylazine from overseas as the predominant sources. Any legislative or regulatory policy that disrupts the legitimate supply or limits veterinary access to xylazine will jeopardize animal welfare and human safety.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges Congress, the Administration, and federal agencies to adopt policy addressing illicit xylazine and other alpha-2 agonists that preserves the availability of veterinary prescription drugs and its responsible use by veterinarians and their clients.