

Press release

ANSES issues a reminder not to treat cats with permethrin-based antiparasitic drugs intended for dogs

Serious or even fatal reactions in cats treated with permethrin-based antiparasitics intended for dogs continue to be identified by ANSES through its veterinary pharmacovigilance scheme managed by the French Agency for Veterinary Medicinal Products. With the arrival of spring, a period usually associated with the antiparasitic treatment of domestic animals, the Agency reminds cat owners not to treat their animals with veterinary drugs containing permethrin.

Now that spring is here, a period associated with the antiparasitic treatment of pets, ANSES is issuing a reminder to remain vigilant, especially with regard to permethrin-based antiparasitic drugs for dogs, as these are toxic to cats. These drugs can cause neurological disorders (tremors, convulsions) that can be fatal to cats because they are unable to eliminate certain compounds such as permethrin. With some concentrated formulations such as pipette products, just a few drops may be sufficient to induce serious effects in the most sensitive animals.

Serious accidents still being reported

For several years now, ANSES has been recording serious or even fatal adverse reactions in cats treated with these external antiparasitics, through the veterinary pharmacovigilance scheme it operates via the French Agency for Veterinary Medicinal Products. Accidents continue to occur despite communication measures targeting veterinarians and animal owners, such as labelling stating that these drugs are absolutely contraindicated in cats. In 2018, the Agency recorded 122 reports of adverse reactions in cats following administration of permethrin-based treatments; 54 were regarded as serious and six cats died as a result of the use of one of these antiparasitic drugs authorised for dogs.

Tips to avoid poisoning

This context has led the Agency to remind cat owners not to treat their animals with veterinary drugs containing permethrin intended for dogs.

In the event of accidental exposure, and even if no adverse reactions have occurred, owners should wash their cat with warm water and soap or dishwashing liquid, and seek prompt veterinary advice.

To prevent cats from being accidentally exposed to these products in homes with more than one animal, owners should keep treated dogs away from cats until the site where the antiparasitic treatment has been applied to the dog is dry, then ensure that cats cannot lick this area.

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