

## Non-veterinary dispensing of ACP

Acepromazine (ACP) is a commonly used drug that is often given as a sedative prior to surgery in veterinary practices, and it can be given as an injection or as small yellow tablets.

As a 'premed' before surgery it is an effective and safe drug.

However, ACP is a prescription only medicine (POM). As such it has not been licensed for supply through any route other than via a qualified and licensed veterinary practitioner. A trainer, groomer or so called 'expert' at a dog show who supplies this drug is not only breaking the law, but is also potentially putting an animal's life at risk.

For the following reasons, the animal's medical history and temperament play an important part in the decision of whether to use the drug:

- ACP increases the chance of an *already* epileptic dog having a fit.
- Like almost all drugs, it can interfere with other medication and make certain medical conditions worse.
- If ACP is given at too high a dose for a long period it can *cause* medical illness.

### ***When should ACP not be used?***

It is often supplied by 'non-vets' for use as a tranquilliser to make aggressive dogs easier to handle at the grooming parlour or dog show.

The aim is to make the animal behave better and more predictably. Unfortunately ACP is likely to *increase* unpredictability.

Whilst many people have good experiences of using ACP, it is likely that they have merely been lucky; the luck will not hold out.

The reason is that ACP will make dogs dozey or lethargic but *not* relaxed. They may react slowly at first, but they also often act impulsively and inappropriately because they are not in command of their faculties. If an event triggers aggression then the dog will react quickly and without its usual self-control.

- Dogs that have had ACP can become 'disinhibited' so they can actually become *more* aggressive.

This is particularly important where fearfulness is involved; imagine what it must feel like to be frightened but out of control so that you cannot move properly or escape.

The dog's ability to protect itself using aggression remains unaffected and if it cannot move to get away then the only remaining choice may be to bite.

ACP has also been known to cause sudden bouts of over-excitement without obvious cause.

Affected dogs cannot be depended upon to act as they normally would.

In the show ring this can be a menace, and it is likely that a dog who has behaved aggressively will gain a bad reputation. This will certainly damage its future in the ring.

ACP is also used to reduce travel problems.

It may help in this situation, but it is important to remember that this drug affects the animal's ability to regulate its body temperature. They need to be kept at a safe temperature and should be checked to make sure they are getting neither too hot or too cold.

Beware that they may also lose their normal inhibitions so that they become more destructive or randy when they wake up!

### ***What is the conclusion?***

Anyone who is not a vet, and who offers to give a dog ACP without detailed knowledge of its temperament and medical history is acting irresponsibly.

If someone offers to give your dog ACP, ask them whether they have the training to deal with the medical consequences if something goes wrong. Are they willing to take financial responsibility for any injuries caused to people or dogs?

If they say no, then hand the tablets back!