



**Veterinary Specialist Group**

## **USE OF PIROXICAM IN DOGS AND CATS**

Piroxicam (also known as Feldene and Piram-D) is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID). It was originally used as a human arthritis drug, and was “accidentally” found to have anti-cancer properties. It is not known how this effect comes about, but it seems that the drug may stimulate the immune system to attack the cancer. Alternatively, the drug may affect enzymes called cyclo-oxygenases to reduce the growth of cancer cells.

We use it in transitional cell carcinoma (TCC), squamous cell carcinoma (SCC), some nasal tumours and recently in osteosarcoma.

The drug is generally safe, but as with any NSAID there can be gastrointestinal side effects. These can be as mild as anorexia (reduced appetite) or as severe as vomiting and diarrhoea. Use of the drug in the face of symptoms could lead to life-threatening gastric ulceration, so any suspicious signs should be reported to us. Also, if such signs are seen stop the drug immediately. One clue may be that the patient’s faeces look black instead of brown, this may mean that gastric bleeding is occurring so is a reason to stop the drug and call us.

If gastrointestinal signs occur but the drug is still an important part of therapy for a cancer, then we can use other drugs to block the damaging effects of piroxicam, consult us about this.

Occasionally NSAIDs can cause decreased kidney function, so we will have checked this in your pet before starting the drug, and will need to use blood tests to check it again during therapy, especially if other drugs that are potentially toxic to the kidneys are being used.

We start the drug at a dose of 0.3mg/kg every second day. If after 2 weeks there have been no problems we will increase to once daily. The drug should be given with or very soon after food. It can be used life-long if the effect is good.

We like to be fairly precise with the actual dose, especially in cats. This often means getting the drug reformulated through a manufacturing pharmacy. This increases cost but also reduces risk. If capsules have to be made up it can take up to 5 days, so we need advance notice of when you are going to run out of drug.

Please call us with any questions or concerns.