Xylazine: an essential animal sedative used across veterinary medicine

AVMA
American Veterinary Medical Association

Veterinary access to legitimate xylazine must be preserved while combating the emerging public health threat of illicit xylazine. Xylazine is an essential drug used across veterinary medicine for the safe handling of many species.

AVMA Supports

Key points

Any legislative or regulatory interventions to combat illicit xylazine need to safeguard the availability of veterinary prescription xylazine and its responsible use by veterinarians and our clients.

Scheduling of xylazine without a provision for its unique needs in veterinary medicine will severely disrupt or eliminate the legitimate supply and prohibit critical uses of the drug.

The AVMA supports public health efforts and policy intended to combat illicit xylazine.

What is the issue?

- Illicit xylazine is being mixed with illicit fentanyl. This potent drug combination poses grave health and safety risks for humans.
- As policy is crafted to help stop the illicit supply, the veterinary community is concerned that new enforcement tools could severely impact the legal and responsible access and use of xylazine by veterinarians and our clients.
- Limiting veterinary access to xylazine will jeopardize animal welfare and human safety.
- Additionally, without federal legislative and regulatory uniformity, states individually regulating xylazine will create a patchwork of rules and regulations for manufacturers and distributors to navigate, increasing the likelihood for supply disruption.
- Xylazine is a low-volume, low-margin generic animal drug. If the regulatory burden or facility investments are too high, the few remaining manufacturers will likely choose to discontinue production.

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How is xylazine used in veterinary medicine?

- Xylazine is a prescription animal sedative used to facilitate safe medical evaluation, treatment, and surgical care of many species and is critical to keeping people and animals safe when handling livestock and zoo, laboratory, and wildlife species.
- In cattle, xylazine is the only safe and effective sedative drug.
- Xylazine can be reversed in veterinary patients, which prevents secondary injuries and allows them to quickly and safely re-enter the herd or the wild.

Current xylazine regulation

Xylazine is an FDA-approved prescription animal drug that can only be used by or under the order of a licensed veterinarian and can only be dispensed in the course of the veterinarian's professional practice.

Federal and state laws require all prescription drugs (for people and animals) to be distributed only to those who are legally entitled to obtain and possess them, and veterinarians are required to keep extensive records.

Manufacturers and distributors of legitimate xylazine have established internal compliance systems to ensure they are only providing products to those legally entitled to them.

Current status of proposed xylazine legislation

- The bipartisan, bicameral **negotiated consensus text of the Combating Illicit Xylazine Act (S. 993)** equips the DEA with the necessary tools to interdict illicit xylazine by scheduling it as a Schedule III drug and preserves veterinary access to this essential animal sedative by increasing the likelihood of the legitimate drug remaining available on the market and allowing veterinarians to continue its safe use. Currently, the bill's sponsors are working to include this legislation as part of a larger legislative package moving through Congress.

AVMA's stance

- The AVMA would support legislation to address the emerging public health threat of xylazine that also protects the unique uses of the animal drug in veterinary medicine and maintains the product in the marketplace for legitimate veterinary use. The AVMA is committed to continuing its work with lawmakers and committee staff toward a federal resolution.
- The AVMA supports continued FDA-oversight of xylazine in non-human species as a prescription animal drug.
- The AVMA supports requiring manufacturers and distributors of legitimate xylazine to report sales to the DEA through an existing tracking system (ARCOS) that identifies unusual activity or changes in ordering patterns.

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