

Medication protocols for emotionally challenged cats during veterinary visits and procedures

from Zero Pain Philosophy and Behavioural Referrals Veterinary Practice

This protocol is designed to be used in conjunction with a cat friendly approach to managing the individual patient. Emotional assessment of the patient should have been carried out as part of that management process. Where necessary advice regarding the emotional health of the patient through consultation with a veterinary colleague working in behavioural medicine may be sought.

PRE-VISIT COMPONENT OF PROTOCOL

Give oral anxiolytic at home 2-3 hours prior to visit.

Options:

- Gabapentin 20 mg/kg PO 2 - 3 hours prior to leaving home.
- Trazodone approx. 10 mg/kg PO 2 hours prior to leaving home.

In exceptional cases where gabapentin alone is not effective it is possible to combine trazodone with gabapentin using the following recommended dose:

- Trazodone 5 - 10 mg/kg PO and Gabapentin 20 mg/kg PO

Liquid preparations can facilitate administration of the medication and accuracy of dosing.

In cases where patients are attending consultations only or routine blood sampling the pre-visit component may be sufficient alone. For particularly challenged patients and those undergoing procedures it may be appropriate to combine with sedation protocols on arrival at the practice.

The presence of acute or chronic pain must always be considered as a potential factor when patients are exhibiting challenging behaviour. The use of gabapentin as part of the pre visit protocol may be of particular benefit for patients with a pain component, provided they are gabapentin naïve. Another option for feline patients is the use of transmucosal buprenorphine, either at home the night before or on arrival. The use of

EMLA or cold spray preparations should be considered before embarking on procedures such as venepuncture.

ON ARRIVAL AT THE PRACTICE

Intramuscular option – ASA I/II patient

Medetomidine 0.02-0.04 mg/kg

Opioid (butorphanol 0.2mg/kg, methadone 0.2mg/kg, buprenorphine 0.02mg/kg depending on pain anticipated/present)

Wait 5 minutes for effect then give;

Ketamine 3-5 mg/kg

Intramuscular option – ASA III+ patient (undetermined cardiac disease, hyperthyroid)

Alfaxalone 2 mg/kg

Butorphanol 0.2 mg/kg

Midazolam 0.2 mg/kg

Subcutaneous option ASA III+ patient

Alfaxalone 3 mg/kg

Butorphanol 0.2 mg/kg

Sedation at the 45 minute time point was adequate to allow the cat to be tabletted in one study.

Please provide oxygen by mask during sedation

DURING HOSPITALISATION

If patients are hospitalised the use of medication to reduce the emotional impact of that stay can be considered.

- Gabapentin 5 – 10 mg / kg up to bid (NB different dose from pre vet visit protocols)

During hospitalisation attention must also be paid to the use of cat friendly interactions and management techniques and the emotional health of the patient should be monitored alongside its physical health reason for hospitalisation.

When gabapentin has been used as part of a pre vet visit medication protocol or for cats during hospitalisation caregivers must be informed of the ongoing impact on mobility and spacial awareness. Cats must be kept inside for at least 8 hours after the last administration of gabapentin.

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