



Standard Operating Procedure: Oral Administration of Medications in Dogs and Cats

These SOPs were developed by the Office of the University Veterinarian and reviewed by Virginia Tech IACUC to provide a reference and guidance to investigators during protocol preparation and IACUC reviewers during protocol review. They can be used as referenced descriptions for procedures on IACUC protocols. However, it is the sole responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the referenced SOPs adequately cover and accurately represent procedures to be undertaken in any research project. Any modification to procedure as described in the SOP must be outlined in each IACUC protocol application (e.g. if the Principal Investigator plans to use a needle size that is not referenced in the SOP, simply state that alteration in the IACUC protocol itself).

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I. Procedure Summary & Goal

- a. Proper administration of oral materials to cats and dogs is an essential skill required by all veterinarians.
- b. The ability to maintain both personal and patient safety is very important and can be achieved with proper techniques.
- c. Understanding the techniques and principles utilized in oral administration of medication, nutritional supplementation, and other materials can assist the veterinarian in instructing clients on how to perform these procedures.

II. Personal Protective Equipment & Hygiene

- a. Hands should be washed thoroughly or sanitized before and after administration of oral medications.
- b. Personal protective equipment appropriate to the setting should be used.

III. Supply List

- a. Syringe, 3-6 ml
- b. Tap water

IV. Detailed Procedure

- a. Tablets, Capsules, Pills & Other Solid Materials
 - i. Dogs
 1. Open the patient's mouth by sliding the thumb of the non-dominant hand behind the upper canine tooth and onto the hard palate while simultaneously extending the head. Most dogs will open their mouth without much pressure.
 2. Place the thumb or other finger of the dominant hand on the lower mandible at the incisor area to further open mouth.
 3. Place the tablet or capsule as far caudally, over base of tongue, as possible with two fingers of the hand, while maintaining pressure on the mandible.
 4. Once the tablet or capsule is over the base of tongue, close the animal's mouth, keeping control of the extended head until it swallows. It is possible to encourage the patient to swallow by rubbing the throat and/or blowing in the nose.
 5. Administer at least 3-6 mls of tap water after oral capsules or tablets are given to ensure the animal swallows, and to aid in transit of the medication to the stomach.
 6. If the patient is a potential "biter," fold the upper lips over the upper arcade of teeth, push down on the mandible at the incisor region and push the tablet or capsule as far back in mouth as possible.
 - ii. Cats

1. With your non-dominant hand, grasp the patient from behind and over the top of the head.
 2. Place your fingers at the angle of jaw and apply gentle pressure while extending the cat's neck.
 - a. Most cats will open their mouth slightly.
 3. Use the opposite hand's finger or thumb to push down on the lower incisor region at the mandibular symphysis.
 4. Continue to keep the cat's head extended.
 5. Place the capsule or tablet as far back in the oral cavity as possible over the base of tongue.
 - a. Use your finger or blunt object to push the pill over the base of the tongue until the cat swallows.
 6. Administer at least 3-6 mls of tap water after oral capsules or tablets are given to insure the animal swallows, and to aid in transit of medication to the stomach.
- b. Liquid materials
- i. Dogs
 1. Grasp the muzzle and slightly extend the neck.
 2. Use the fingers of the hand on the muzzle to make a small pouch at the commissure of the lips.
 3. Place the syringe with the desired material at the commissure of the lips, and behind the last upper molar, and give the liquid slowly until the animal "begins to swallow".
 4. Give small amounts slowly until finished.
 5. If coughing occurs stop the administration of the liquid.
 - ii. Cats
 1. Use your non-dominant hand to grasp the cat over the head at the angle of the jaws and gently extend the head.
 2. Place the syringe at the commissure of lips, behind the last upper molar and begin to give small amounts of the liquid until the cat begins to swallow.
 3. Continue to give small amounts of the desired substance slowly.
 4. If coughing occurs stop the administration of the liquid.

V. Potential Adverse Effects, Mitigation, or Treatment

- a. Excessive salivation from chewing on capsules or tablets that may result in vomiting.
- b. Aspiration if liquid therapies or water are administered too quickly.
- c. Avoidance measures:

- i. Place tablets or capsules at the back of the throat and push down quickly enough to avoid chewing and crushing
- ii. Keep head in approximately horizontal position so animal swallows before liquid can be aspirated
- iii. Administer liquids slowly in small increments.

VI. Variations

- a. Pilling devices for dogs and cats.

VII. Links to Multimedia Aids and References

- a. http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/cliented/dog_meds.aspx
- b. http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/ClientED/cat_meds.aspx
- c. Many others available online.