

***Tritrichomonas foetus* infection in cats and treatment with RONIDAZOLE**

Handout for Veterinary Surgeons

A recent study by Dr Jody Gookin at the North Carolina State University (who has performed most of the work on this infection in cats) identified that ronidazole (an antibiotic similar but not the same as metronidazole) has good efficacy against *T. foetus* infection in cats (JVIM, 2005 19: 436; JVIM, 2006 20: 536-543). From limited studies its use appears to be relatively safe in cats, although a small number of patients have developed neurological signs e.g. twitching and seizures, which have resolved on stopping the drug. (The neurological signs are similar to those seen in some kittens, or cats with liver disease, when they are given standard or high doses of metronidazole).

Ronidazole is not licensed for use in cats; it should only be used with caution and with informed, signed, owner consent. Initial studies suggested that a dose of 30-50mg/kg once to twice daily for two weeks is capable of both resolving clinical signs and potentially eradicating the *T. foetus*. However, keeping to the lower end of the dose is advisable (**30mg/kg**), as is reducing it even further for young kittens, or cats with hepatopathy; (**10mg/kg** once to twice daily for two weeks). The bitterness of the powder means that it must be placed in capsules prior to administration.

Ronidazole (10% powder preparation) is commonly used to treat trichomoniasis in birds (e.g. pigeons). However, it is not available in this form in the UK, and the consistency of the 10% formulation is difficult to guarantee. Therefore, we have gained permission from the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) to use 100% pure chemical grade ronidazole to treat *T. foetus* infected cats. This is the form that is now used in the USA. In the UK it can be obtained in capsule form from Nova Laboratories, Tel: 0116 223 0099. While the VMD have agreed to our use of this chemical in these cats, *they strongly recommend that detailed records are maintained and that no cat is treated without first obtaining informed, signed, owner consent.* In addition, we should compile data on all potential adverse effects: send case information on any potential adverse effects to Danielle.Gunn-Moore@ed.ac.uk.

Care should be exercised in the use of ronidazole; there are very few studies of its use in cats, and long-term studies in other species have suggested potential toxicity concerns (and in many countries its use in food-producing animals has been banned to minimise human exposure). Careful handling of the drug is therefore advised.

For further information on *T. foetus* infection in cats: www.fabcats.org. For further discussion, contact Daniëlle Gunn-Moore: Email: Danielle.Gunn-Moore@ed.ac.uk.

Tel: 44 (0)131 650 7650 Fax: 44 (0)131 650 7652

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