

DO YOUR HOMEWORK AND BE ONLINE PET PHARMACY **AWARE**

Internet sites that sell drugs for pets can be reputable pharmacies. Some however are not. They are fronts for businesses breaking Federal, State or International laws. These illegal pet pharmacies may sell counterfeit, outdated, mislabeled, incorrectly made or improperly stored drugs. If you still want to purchase your pet's prescription medicines online, remember you can protect yourself by doing your homework and being **A.W.A.R.E.** of online pet pharmacies.

A- Ask your vet. Before purchasing online, talk with your veterinarian about what's best for you and your pet. Ask questions like, "Have you ever worked with this pharmacy site?" or "Have other clients used that site before and what are their experiences with it?"

W- Watch for red flags. When buying online watch for cues that may indicate fraudulent practices. Things to look for: sites that do not require veterinary prescriptions for the medications. Websites that sell prescription veterinary medicines **without valid veterinary prescriptions** are BREAKING THE LAW under the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act! A pharmacy cannot sell you a veterinary prescription without a valid prescription or other type of order from a **licensed** veterinarian. Watch for if the site has no licensed pharmacist available to answer questions, if the site does not list a physical business address, phone number or other contact information, check to see if the site is not based in the USA, and check to see if the site is licensed by State Board of Pharmacy. Also be aware of the sites security to prevent identity theft and if the prices are dramatically lower than other listed sites. If it seems too good to be true, then it probably is. Make sure that the site ships you what you ordered, and do NOT give these medicines to your pet if they are different from what you ordered.

A- Always check for the sites Accreditation. In addition to following Federal and State licensing and inspection, the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (**NABP**) created a voluntary accreditation program called **VET-VIPPS** (Veterinary-Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites). Those sites accredited by VET-VIPPS are appropriately licensed in their State, undergo NABP on-site surveys every three years, and must meet other criteria in order to be accredited.

R- Report problems and suspicious online pet pharmacies. You can help prevent these pharmacies from gaining momentum and protect yourself, your pets and others from falling victim to these illegal online pet pharmacies by reporting them. To report problems directly to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM), call **1-888-FDA-VETS**. For more information on how to report problems visit the following website: <http://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/SafetyHealth/ReportaProblem/ucm055305.htm>

E- Educate yourself about online pharmacies. The best defense you have against illegal online pet pharmacies is education. By knowing what to look for and whom to turn to for questions you can protect both your pet and yourself from fraud.