

Steroids (Anti-Inflammatories)

Steroids are a type of pharmaceutical that can be divided in two general categories. The first are called **corticosteroids**, which are potent anti-inflammatories used for a range of conditions from lameness to intestinal and respiratory problems. The second include **anabolic steroids** which are used to stimulate muscle development and general weight gain. This factsheet covers the use of **corticosteroids**, which are similar synthetic versions of a natural hormone produced by the adrenal glands, next to the kidneys.



STEROIDS CAN BE INJECTED INTO ARTHRITIC/INFLAMED JOINTS

Main actions of corticosteroids:

- anti-inflammatory
- suppression of the immune system
- increased glucose production.

Route of administration:

- **systemic** via oral preparations (tablets or powder), intramuscular or intravenous injections (as injectable solutions);
- **topical** on skin (as ointment or spray) and eyes (as drops);
- **inhaled** into respiratory system via inhalers;
- **locally** into joints (intra-articular), into tendon sheaths and into or around injured tissues (e.g. around injured ligament attachments to bone).

Common preparations and route of administration

Dexamethasone: short acting oral and injectable preparations

Prednisolone: Eye drops and short acting oral powder added to feed.

Triamcinolone: longer acting injectable used locally, into joints and intramuscularly.

Methyl-Prednisolone: longer acting used locally and into joints.

Fluticasone and Beclomethasone: in metered dose inhaler.



STEROIDS CAN BE ADMINISTERED VIA AN INHALER TO TREAT INFLAMMATORY RESPIRATORY DISEASE

KEY POINTS

- Steroids are the very potent synthetic variants of a naturally occurring hormone.
- They have a wide variety of uses and come in a whole array of different preparations.
- They are used primarily for their potent anti-inflammatory action.
- They have been used for a long time and have got a proven efficacy.
- The drawback is a set of side-effects and contraindications which can occasionally be serious.
- It is fundamental, for an efficient and safe result, to follow the prescription's instructions in terms of the condition treated, the length of treatment, the dosage and any other information provided.

Indications for use

Orthopaedic:

- osteo-arthritis as medication into the joint
- inflammation of synovial structures e.g. medication of navicular bursa or tendon sheath
- back pain by medication of muscles around the area.

Respiratory:

- recurrent airway obstruction (RAO) using oral or inhaled treatment
- inflammatory airway disease (IAD).

Skin:

- hypersensitivity or allergic reactions like insect-related hypersensitivity and urticaria as oral, injectable or topical medication;
- auto-immune conditions like pemphigus as oral or injectable medication.

Eyes:

- inflammatory and immune conditions like recurrent uveitis (moon blindness), keratitis, conjunctivitis by topical treatment.



RECURRENT UVEITIS

Abdominal:

- colitis (inflammation of large intestine)
- liver inflammation.

Cardiovascular:

- treatment of shock.



SOME CASES OF BACK PAIN CAN BE TREATED WITH LOCAL STEROID INJECTION

Side-effects and contra-indications

Laminitis: there is anecdotal evidence of a link between the use of steroids and laminitis. However, the link is unproven and the risk is extremely low.

Infections: increased risk of infections as a result of suppression of the immune system.

Corneal ulcers: delayed healing or deterioration if they were present at start of topical eye treatment; - might develop as a result of prolonged treatment as in recurrent uveitis.

Calcification

(calcium laid down in tissues):

around and within tendon tissues when medicating tendon sheaths if tendon injury was also present, or after repeated treatments.

Should be avoided in pregnant mares because of potential for abortion.

Should be avoided around vaccinations because it might render them ineffective.



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