

# Megestrol Acetate

(me-jess-trole)

**Category:** Progestin Hormone

**Other Names for this Medication:** Ovaban®, Megace®

**Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary:** 5 mg & 20 mg oral tablets.

**Human:** 20 mg & 40 mg oral tablets; 400 mg/10mL (40 mg/mL) & 625 mg/5 mL (125 mg/mL) oral suspension.

This information sheet does not contain all available information for this medication. It is to help answer commonly asked questions and help you give the medication safely and effectively to your animal. If you have other questions or need more information about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.

## Key Information

- ▶ Progestin (progesterone) used for hormonal treatment of a variety of conditions in dogs and cats.
- ▶ May give with food or on an empty stomach, but giving with food may help prevent vomiting.
- ▶ Megestrol can have many side effects, some of them serious. In particular, watch for changes in mammary glands (breasts)/nipples or any vaginal discharge.
- ▶ Pregnant women should use caution when handling this medication.

## How is this medication useful?

Megestrol is a progestin (progesterone) hormone used in female dogs for delay of estrus (heat) and to reduce the signs (eg, mammary enlargement and discharge) of false pregnancy. In male dogs, this medicine has been used to treat benign prostatic hypertrophy (BPH; prostatic enlargement). In cats, it may be used for a variety of skin and behavior-related conditions. Because megestrol can have serious side effects, it must be used with caution.

The FDA (U.S. Food & Drug Administration) has approved this drug for use in dogs for the postponement of estrus and the alleviation of false pregnancy. The FDA allows veterinarians to prescribe and use products containing this drug in different species or for other conditions in certain situations. You and your veterinarian can discuss why this drug is the most appropriate choice.

## What should I tell my veterinarian to see if this medication can be safely given?

Many things might affect how well this drug will work in your animal. Be sure to discuss the following with your veterinarian so together you can make the best treatment decisions.

- ▶ Other drugs can interact with this drug, so be sure to tell your veterinarian and pharmacist what medications (including vitamins, supplements, or herbal therapies) you give your animal, including the amount and time you give each.
- ▶ Tell your veterinarian about any conditions or diseases your pet may have now or has had in the past.
- ▶ If your animal has been treated for the same disease or condition in the past, tell your veterinarian about the treatment and how well it did or didn't work.
- ▶ If your animal is pregnant or nursing, talk to your veterinarian about the risks of using this drug.
- ▶ Tell your veterinarian and pharmacist about any medication side effects (including allergic reactions, lack of appetite, diarrhea, itching, hair loss) your pet has developed in the past.

## When should this medication not be used or be used very carefully?

No drug is 100% safe in all patients, but your veterinarian will discuss with you any specific concerns about using this drug in your animal.

This drug **SHOULD NOT** be used in patients:

- ▶ That are allergic to it.
- ▶ With uterine disease, uterine bleeding, diabetes mellitus, or mammary (breast) cancer.
- ▶ That are pregnant.
- ▶ With blood clots (thrombophlebitis).

This drug should be used **WITH CAUTION** in:

- ▶ Dogs prior to their first heat cycle.
- ▶ Dogs with abnormal cycles when used for anestrus (not going into heat) therapy.
- ▶ Cats with viral infections (eg, feline herpes) as megestrol can make these infections worse.

If your pet has any of these conditions, talk to your veterinarian about the potential risks versus benefits.

When used for reproductive control, it is recommended that patients undergo: **1)** a thorough reproductive history to rule out occurrence of heat within the last 1-2 months; **2)** a complete physical exam; **3)** evaluation of mammary glands to check for mammary tumors; **4)** vaginal smear to check for presence of heat.

## What are the side effects of this medication?

Side effects of megestrol can be serious; this drug should be used with caution.

### Side effects that usually are not serious include:

- ▶ Dogs: Greater appetite and weight gain, tiredness/lack of energy, mild changes in behavior, and changes in hair color.
- ▶ Cats: Greater appetite and weight gain, tiredness/lack of energy, and mild changes in behavior.

You don't have to be overly concerned if you see any of these signs unless they are severe, worsen, or continue to be a problem. Contact your veterinarian if this happens.

### Side effects that may be serious or indicate a serious problem:

- ▶ Mammary gland (breast) enlargement or tumors; changes in the animal's mammary gland or nipple size or the development of a discharge.
- ▶ Uterine (womb) or vaginal discharge.
- ▶ Diabetes mellitus (reversible). Watch for greater thirst and need to urinate.
- ▶ Cats: weakness; tiredness/lack of energy; shaking; collapse (passing out); loss of appetite; weight loss; vomiting; diarrhea; yellowing of eyes, skin, or gums (jaundice); painful abdomen/stomach; seizures (convulsions); behavior changes; or hair loss.

If you see any of these signs, contact your veterinarian immediately.

**If my pet gets too much of this medication (an overdose), what should I do?**

If you witness or suspect an overdose, contact your veterinarian or an animal poison control center for further advice. Animal poison control centers that are open 24 hours a day include: **Pet Poison HELPLINE** (855-764-7661) and **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center** (888-426-4435); a consultation fee is charged for these services.

**How should this medication be given?**

For this medication to work, give it exactly as your veterinarian has prescribed. It's a good idea to always check the prescription label to be sure you are giving the drug correctly.

- ▶ Tablets may be crushed and given either with food or on an empty stomach. If your pet vomits or acts sick after receiving the drug on an empty stomach, try giving the next dose with food or a small treat. If vomiting continues, contact your veterinarian.
- ▶ Liquid forms of this medication must be measured carefully. Your veterinarian or pharmacist can help by providing special measuring spoons or syringes.
- ▶ If you have difficulty getting your animal to take the medicine, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist for tips to help with dosing and reducing the stress of medication time.
- ▶ This medication can be given for various lengths of time. Be sure you understand how long your veterinarian wants you to continue giving this medication. Prescription refills may be necessary before the therapy will be complete. Before stopping this medication, talk to your veterinarian, as there may be important reasons to continue its use.

**What should I do if I miss giving a dose of this medication?**

If you miss a dose, give it when you remember, but if it is close to the time for the next dose, skip the dose you missed and give it at the next scheduled time. After that, return to the regular dosing schedule. Do not double-up or give extra doses.

**How should I store this medication?**

- ▶ Store this medication in the original prescription bottle, foil strip, or an approved dosage reminder container (ie, pill minder) protected from light. The veterinary manufacturer recommends storing the tablets from 36-86°F (2-30°C).
- ▶ If your veterinarian or pharmacist has made (compounded) a special formulation for your animal, follow the storage recommendations and expiration date for the product.
- ▶ Keep away from children and other animals.

**Can handling this medication be hazardous to me, my family, or other pets?**

Pregnant women and people who are allergic to this drug should be very careful not to accidentally take it. Because this drug has a higher risk for causing birth defects, pregnant women should wear disposable gloves when giving doses or handling the drug and avoid inhaling any dust from split or crushed tablets. Skin or eyes exposed to powder or liquids containing the drug should immediately be washed or rinsed off thoroughly, and your physician contacted.

**What other information is important for this medication?**

- ▶ Do not flush this medication down the toilet or wash it down the sink. If a community drug “take-back” program is available, use this option. If there is no take-back program, mix the drug with coffee grounds or cat litter (to make it undesirable to children and animals and unrecognizable to people who might go through your trash), place the mixture in a sealable plastic bag to keep it from leaking out, and throw the bag out with the regular trash.
- ▶ Do not save leftover medication for future use or give it to others to use.

**What other information is important for this medication?**

- ▶ If you are seeing a different veterinarian than normal, be sure to tell them your animal is taking this drug. Animals that require surgery or are stressed from trauma or illness may require additional glucocorticoid drugs.
- ▶ Use of this drug may not be allowed in certain animal competitions. Check rules and regulations before entering your animal in a competition while this medication is being administered.

**If you have any other questions or concerns about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.**