

Zoetis launching new doggy med for noise-related anxiety

May 16 2016, by By Linda A. Johnson



This photo provided by Zoetis shows the drug Sileo. Fido and Spot may not have to cower under the bed this summer when fireworks and thunderstorms hit, with the launch of Sileo, the first medicine approved for treating anxiety over loud noises, a widespread problem linked to destruction of property, terrified dogs running away and even life-threatening injuries to some. (Zoetis via AP)

Fido and Spot may not have to cower under the bed this summer when fireworks and thunderstorms hit, thanks to the first prescription veterinary medicine for treating anxiety over loud noises—a widespread problem that causes property destruction, terrified dogs running away and even life-threatening injuries or euthanasia for some.

Veterinary medicine maker Zoetis Inc. of Florham Park, New Jersey, said Monday that recently approved Sileo will be available through veterinarians within a week.

It's a much-needed option for dogs not helped enough by repurposed medicines designed for their humans, or by rarely effective behavioral strategies.

Owners of at least one-third of the 70 million dogs in the U.S. report problems with fear of loud noises. Dogs are sometimes so frightened they jump through plate-glass windows, destroy doors while trying to escape a room or run into traffic and get hit by cars. As a result, July 5 is the most common day for frustrated pet owners to drop a dog off at a shelter, which sometimes leads to the animal being euthanized.

"I have seen the absolutely worst things that can happen with noise anxiety," Dr. J. Michael McFarland, head of U.S. pet marketing at Zoetis, told The Associated Press in an exclusive interview.

The anxiety gets worse over time without treatment and is much like posttraumatic stress disorder in humans, said McFarland, a veterinarian who earlier in his career spent a quarter-century working at animal hospitals, including running one of the first after-hours emergency pet hospitals in the country.

Current treatments range from human anti-anxiety pills such as Xanax and tranquilizers that sedate dogs for many hours but don't really calm them to behavioral treatments. Those include confining the dog to a small room or portable kennel, or trying to desensitize dogs by repeatedly exposing them to increasingly loud noise, which McFarland said he's never seen work. Another option is close-fitting shirts that comfort some dogs with minor noise problems by simulating a hug.

Sileo works by blocking norepinephrine, a brain chemical similar to adrenaline that pumps up anxiety. It comes in prefilled plastic syringes with a dial for setting a precise dose according to the dog's weight.

The needleless syringe is placed between the dog's gum and lip. A little push ejects a small amount of gel that's absorbed by the tissue lining the dog's cheek, which limits how much circulates in the dog's body at a time while enabling the medicine to start working within 30 to 60 minutes. It works for two to three hours, said McFarland, who's used Sileo with good results on his Finnish Lapphund.

Each syringe costs \$30, about two doses for an 80- to 100-pound dog or four doses for a 40-pound dog.

Zoetis has exclusive rights to distribute Sileo in the U.S. under an agreement with its developer, Orion Corp. of Finland.

In testing on 182 pet beagles conducted on New Year's Eve, 75 percent of their owners rated its effect good or excellent, compared with 33 percent whose dogs got a placebo. Side effects were rare and minor.

In another study, 90 percent of pet owners said it was easy or very easy to administer.

Zoetis is a top maker of medicines and vaccines for pets and livestock, including Apoquel for itchy skin from dermatitis and Rimadyl for pain from arthritis and surgery. Formerly part of drugmaker Pfizer Inc., Zoetis operates in more than 100 countries and reported revenue of \$4.8 billion last year.

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