FDA approves first monoclonal antibody treatment for arthritis in dogs

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Man's aging best friend has a new treatment to dull osteoarthritis pain as

the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced approval Friday of the first monoclonal antibody for dogs.

Called Librela, the bedinvetmab shot controls pain from the most common form of arthritis in dogs. Osteoarthritis (OA) affects about 25% of dogs during their lifetime.

In this condition, the cartilage cushion in the joints breaks down, causing bones to rub against each other. Besides pain, dogs with OA have limited joint movement, and sometimes bone spurs.

The medication is the second monoclonal antibody approved for animal use. The FDA approved one to treat cats with OA in January 2022.

To evaluate the drug, field studies were conducted in both the United States and the European Union. In both, half the dogs received Librela and half received a sterile saline injection every 28 days for a total of three doses.

Dog owners answered questions about the severity of their dog's pain and how much that pain impeded their dog's mobility.

The research deemed Librela effective when at least two doses were given 28 days apart.

Made by New Jersey-based Zoetis, Librela controls pain by binding to a protein called canine nerve growth factor (NGF). It is elevated in dogs with OA. Librela inhibits NGF's activity after binding to it.

Dog owners whose pets have OA can get a prescription from a licensed veterinarian. An injectable drug, Librela is administered only by professionals, who can also assess side effects.

Among potential side effects are increased blood urea nitrogen, an indicator of kidney function; urinary tract infection; bacterial skin infection, skin irritation; rash; pain at injection site; vomiting, and weight loss.

Dog owners should work with their vets to report any adverse side effects, the FDA said.

More information: The American Kennel Club has more on osteoarthritis in dogs.