

Drug reactions

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Fortunately we don't often see drug reactions, but they are always on the cards. There are two main types of drug reactions, **toxic and allergic**.

The most common are the **toxic reactions** and occur when there is:

1. Incorrect administration of a drug. (e.g. Intra-venous instead of Intra-muscular).
2. An overdose due to an error in calculating the dose.
3. Increased sensitivity by an individual to a drug.

An example of a potentially toxic drug is **Procaine Penicillin**. This is a very commonly used antibiotic which is toxic if administered intra-venously. Occasionally, if proper care is not taken (checking that the needle is not accidentally in a vein), and rarely, when proper care is taken, the drug goes directly into the bloodstream where the toxic affects of the procaine can result in anything from slight excitability through to severe convulsions and even death.

Another toxicity we saw recently was in a miniature horse that showed neurological signs (loss of balance progressing to recumbency and coma) that followed a day after oral worm dosing by the owner. The drug **Moxidectin**, the active ingredient in a number of worm drenches and pastes, had been administered. There is evidence available now that foals less than four months old (and especially miniature foals) are particularly sensitive to this drug. With intensive fluid therapy this foal made a full recovery.

Allergies are uncommon with most modern drugs. But when they occur the symptoms vary from skin urticaria (soft skin bumps) usually developing a few hours after administration of a drug, through to anaphylaxis, respiratory distress, shock and collapse, which develop rapidly, within minutes, after administration. Of course drugs in the form of insect stings can produce the same symptoms.

We occasionally come in for criticism because we do not hand out drugs. These are some of the reasons why. Please talk to us if you have any doubts over the dosage or administration of any drugs you may have to administer.