



Are Single Doses Killing Your Compliance?

Poor dispensing practices are costing you money and risking patients' health

By Wendy S. Myers, Communication Solutions for Veterinarians Inc.

At a busy walk-in clinic outside of Atlanta, a wall-mounted dispenser stores single doses of every brand of preventative on the market. Each time receptionists break open a pack to fill the bins of single doses, they record opened packs in a log. The inventory manager is frustrated that single doses never reconcile.

Although parasite products are in high demand at this five-doctor hospital, single-dose dispensing is killing compliance. During my consultation, I found that 19% of preventatives were sold as single doses—that's nearly 1 in 5. Only 43% of dogs were getting year-round protection, with 5 months as the average number of doses sold per active dog. Among cats, only 12% were on preventatives year-round, and one month was the average number of doses. The choices of multiple brands and single dosing was confusing clients and wrecking compliance.

Why You Shouldn't Sell Single Doses

Some practice owners and managers argue that single dosing is a necessary strategy in today's economy. But are you costing clients more money in the long run? Single dosing is sporadic at best, with clients repurchasing only after they've seen fleas or "just remembered" that the dog needs its heartworm pill. Breaks in prevention could lead to flea-allergy dermatitis, hot spots, intestinal parasites, zoonotic risks, heartworm disease, and expensive treatments.

Here's why you shouldn't sell single doses:

- Internet pharmacies don't sell singles
- VCA and Banfield hospitals nationwide don't sell singles
- Staff labor to break packages and dispense singles is costly to track
- Clients should be called at Day 20 before the next dose must be purchased and given at Day 30
- Client satisfaction declines if the perception is that the product isn't working, even though inconsistent use may be to blame

- Manufacturers' guarantees may be void for singles
 - If your hospital recommends year-round protection, a single dose contradicts your standard of care
- Simply put, single doses are bad medicine and bad for business!

So How Do You Get Rid of Single Doses?

Reward clients with greater savings on 12 packs. At a southern California practice, the cost per dose on a 12 pack is 30 percent less than a single tablet. Clients pay \$16.25 for a single dose compared to \$12.50 per dose in a 12 pack. That's a savings of \$45 for a year's supply. Another bonus: If clients buy a year's supply, they likely won't look online for better prices.

Use internal promotions to boost sales of packs. Place a sign on the counter that says "Ask me how to save 30% on your pet's preventatives today!" Put stickers on reminder cards that say "Save 30% when you buy a year's supply of parasite preventatives for your pet." Send e-mail reminders to promote savings such as "Got fleas? We can get rid of them now. Save 30% when you buy a year's supply for constant protection of your best friend." Turn your lost-and-found bulletin board into an educational center. Move lost pet notices into a notebook that's placed on a bench in the reception area. Now use the bulletin board for product promotion. Post a question such as "Did you know that year-round parasite protection is just 42 cents a day?" Make comparisons to items clients frequently purchase. For example, have a headline that says the cost of year-round prevention is... 42 cents a day, less than a postage stamp... \$2.94 a week, less than a latte at Starbucks... \$13.02, less than a large pizza at Papa John's.

Only stock packs of preventatives. At VCA and Banfield hospitals nationwide, six packs are the smallest quantities available. Follow their lead and stock six and 12 packs of heartworm preventatives. For topical flea products, carry three, six and 12 packs. Set prices so 12 packs are the lowest cost per dose, followed by six packs and then three doses. Remember, you don't sell single doses of NSAIDs or antibiotics because pets need more than one dose to resolve the problem. The same is true for preventatives.

Promote the "Buy six, get one free" bonus. This lowers the price even more for topicals such as Frontline Plus. When checking out clients, ask "Would you like to get a free dose of Frontline Plus valued at \$20 when you buy a six pack?"

When you stop selling single doses, you promote year-round protection for pets, protect practice profits, and provide patients with better medicine. Take the risk for the health of your patients and practice. Stop selling single doses!

Wendy S. Myers owns Communication Solutions for Veterinarians in Denver, Colorado. Her consulting firm helps practice owners and teams improve compliance, client service and hospital management. Communication Solutions for Veterinarians has provided mystery phone shopper training for more than 1,500 receptionists nationwide. Wendy is the author of three books and five videos. Subscribe to Communication Solutions for Veterinarians' monthly e-newsletter at www.csvets.com.