**Effects of human topical hormone therapy on pets**

Hormonal treatments for humans applied to the skin can pose a risk not only to other family members, but also to pets. This is because if the animal touches the impregnated skin of the treated person or any fabric that has been in contact with them, the active substance can penetrate the animal's body. This has led to recent reports in several European countries of hyperoestrogenism in dogs and cats in contact with people treated with such products. Users should therefore take precautions to avoid the discomfort this causes to their animals.

**Background**

Patients treated with skin gels containing synthetic hormones are generally well informed about the precautions to take with regard to other family members, to avoid any potential adverse effects from repeated involuntary contact with skin impregnated with this type of medicine. However, they are less aware of the danger to their pets of exposure to these products.

**Adverse effects in animals reported in several European countries**

Several cases of adverse effects involving small dogs, cats, puppies and kittens – both female and male – have been reported in several European countries. They were caused by repeated contact with hormonal treatments applied to their owner’s skin. All of the products involved were oestrogens. These tend to be applied to surfaces of the body such as the thighs, abdomen or arms, which can then potentially come into contact with the animal. This contact with the medicine can also occur through bed sheets, if the treated person and the animal sleep in the same bed.

**Exposure that results in signs characteristic of a hyperoestrogenic state**

The exposed animals mainly developed symptoms suggesting hyperoestrogenism, in particular swollen mammary glands and/or vulvas in females. Signs of spayed females going into heat were also described.

In addition, dermatological problems were reported, with hair loss mainly on the ventral side of the thorax and abdomen [1]. Moreover, oestrogen’s toxicity to bone marrow can eventually cause anaemia that may be life-threatening to the animal [2].

The time to symptom onset varies, ranging from a few weeks to several years. Symptoms generally improve or even disappear when the animal is no longer exposed to the hormones.

The clinical signs observed in these reported cases are consistent with the data published in the scientific literature.

**No cases recorded in France to date**

No cases mentioning such events have been reported so far in the national pharmacovigilance database of the French Agency for Veterinary Medicinal Products (ANSES-ANMV) or by veterinary poison control centres in France.

If symptoms suggestive of a hormonal disorder are detected, owners are strongly urged to get their animal examined promptly by a veterinarian, making it clear that someone in the household is undergoing topical hormonal treatment (oestrogen, progesterone or testosterone).

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1. Hyperoestrogenism is defined as an elevated level of oestrogen, a hormone secreted by females.
Protecting both people and pets in the household

In order to avoid any discomfort to their animals, users of these medicines are reminded to:

- wash their hands after applying gel;
- cover the treated areas with clothes;
- prevent animals from licking the treated areas;
- avoid sleeping with their pets;
- if the pet comes into direct contact with a treated area, prevent the animal from grooming itself and use water to rinse any body surfaces onto which the medicine may have been transferred.

ANSES-ANMV reiterates that these precautions for use are valid for all human medicinal products on the market, intended for dermal application.

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References:


To report an adverse effect in an animal following the use of a veterinary drug:

https://pharmacovigilance-anmv.anses.fr/