Albuterol

Proventil® and Torpex® are other names for this medication.

How Is This Medication Useful?

- Albuterol is a drug which acts to relax the muscles of the airways and is used to improve breathing. It is used in animals for relief of cough caused by asthma and other conditions.

Are There Conditions or Times When Its Use Might Cause More Harm Than Good?

- Albuterol can sometimes over-stimulate the brain and the heart. It should not be used in animals with heart disease, high blood pressure, seizures, thyroid conditions or diabetes. Albuterol has also caused low blood sugar and fast heartbeat in the fetuses of mothers taking the medication. It should not be used in a pregnant animal unless you and your veterinarian decide that the benefit to the mother is worth more than the risk to the babies.

- If your animal has any of the above conditions, talk to your veterinarian about the potential risks of using the medication versus the benefits that it might have.

What Side Effects Can Be Seen With Its Use?

- The most common side effects seen with albuterol are nervousness, shaking, fast heartbeat, and dizziness.

- In horses, the most common side effects are sweating, muscle tremors and mild excitement. All of these side effects usually go away within 30 minutes of giving the dose. If they do not, you should call your veterinarian.

How Should It Be Given?

- The Torpex® inhaler should be shaken 2-3 times before using. Give the inhaler a test puff away from the horse's face. Be careful to avoid inhaling the mist yourself. Insert the tip into the nostril and deliver 3 puffs. If the medication does not work in a few minutes, you may give 3 more puffs. Do not give more than 24 puffs in a day and not more than 5 days in a row.

- The successful outcome of your animal's treatment with this medication depends upon your commitment and ability to administer it exactly as the veterinarian has prescribed. Please do not skip doses or stop giving the medication. If you have difficulty giving doses consult your veterinarian or pharmacist who can offer administration techniques or change the dosage form to a type of medication that may be more acceptable to you and your animal.

- Some other drugs can interact with this medication so tell your veterinarian about any drugs or foods that you currently give your animal. Do not give new foods or medications without first asking your veterinarian.

- Dogs and Cats: Give this drug exactly as instructed by your veterinarian. It will help your pet breathe better. If you miss a dose, do not double it the next time as it will probably cause the side effects mentioned above. It may be given as an oral liquid, a tablet, as an aerosol or in a special machine (nebulizer) with a special mask which will allow your pet to breathe the medication directly into its lungs. It is usually given up to four times in one day. If you notice any deterioration in your pet's breathing or changes in behavior, call your veterinarian immediately.

- Horses: Horses usually receive albuterol as an inhaler (Torpex®). It is given as an aerosol into the lungs through a special inhaler. Horses receive 3 puffs per dose up to 4 treatments daily for no more than 5 days in a row.

What Other Information Is Important About This Medication?

- This medication should be stored at room temperature and in the original packaging provided by your veterinarian until immediately before use. You should watch your pet for all the above side effects mentioned above.

- Dogs and Cats: You should not discontinue the use of this drug without the advice of your veterinarian.

- Horses: This drug is a Class 3 drug in the ARCI (Animal Racing Commissioners International) uniform classification guidelines. It is banned by the ASHA as a prohibited substance in performance horses. You should keep it away from your horse's eyes when administering. You should also avoid inhaling the mist yourself.