**Amitriptyline**

Elavil® is another name for this medication.

**How Is This Medication Useful?**
- This medication is used to make your pet feel less anxious when it is away from you (separation anxiety) or during certain frightening circumstances (thunderstorms, fireworks).
- Amitriptyline is also useful in stopping some bad behaviors such as urine spraying or excessive biting and chewing of skin.
- It is also used in birds to stop behavior problems such as feather picking.

**Are There Conditions or Times When Its Use Might Cause More Harm Than Good?**
- Amitriptyline may cause dangerous side effects if mixed with certain chemicals such as those found in tick collars.
- Certain foods such as aged cheese may also cause this drug to have bad side effects.
- This medication should not be used in pregnant animals as it has caused birth defects.
- Amitriptyline crosses into mother’s milk and should not be given to mothers who are still nursing babies.
- This medication should be used with caution in diabetic animals as it may alter usual insulin requirements. If this medication is suddenly stopped after being given regularly for a long time, your pet may experience vomiting, anxiety and shaking.
- 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 from amitriptyline are drowsiness, constipation, and dry mouth. Amitriptyline may also cause blood sugar to either increase or decrease in diabetic patients.
- Very high doses of amitriptyline can cause severe damage to the heart.

**How Should It Be Given?**
- 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:** This medication is usually given to dogs and cats one to two times daily. It may take several weeks before changes in behavior are seen. Do not skip doses. If a dose is missed, do not double doses to catch up as this may increase the undesirable side effects. When the desired effect is reached with this drug, it must not be stopped suddenly. The drug must be tapered off slowly or the animal may suffer uncomfortable symptoms of withdrawal.
- **Birds:** Amitriptyline must be mixed into a special dosage form when used in birds because the tablets are too strong for birds. Most birds will receive a liquid form that should be stored exactly as the pharmacist has recommended.
- **Horses:** This drug is banned by AHSA and should not be used in horses that are going to race or be shown.

**What Other Information Is Important About This Medication?**
- Tablets and capsules of this medication should be stored at room temperature. Liquids should be stored exactly as the pharmacist has recommended and discarded by the date shown on the prescription bottle.
- Overdoses of amitriptyline can be very serious in both humans and animals, be very careful to keep out of the reach of children and animals.