Hydrocodone

Hydromorphone® and TuSSIG® are other names for this medication.

How Is This Medication Useful?
- Hydrocodone is a narcotic drug used primarily as a cough suppressant in animals with harsh, non-productive coughs such as kennel cough, collapsing trachea, and viral lung infections.

Are There Conditions or Times When Its Use Might Cause More Harm Than Good?
- Hydrocodone should not be used at the same time as drugs known as MAO inhibitors (Mita-ban®, Dip, Preventic® Flea Collars, Anipryl®, and isoniazid are a few of these drugs). When hydrocodone is given with these drugs it can cause severe increases in blood pressure that can cause death. Aged cheese can also cause this effect, so make sure that your pets do not get into any aged cheese while on this drug. If your pet is receiving any of these medications, your veterinarian will ask you to stop giving them for at least 2-5 weeks before he prescribes hydrocodone.
- Because hydrocodone inhibits the intestines from efficient elimination, it should not be given to animals with diarrhea caused by a toxin (poison). Once the toxin is eliminated, hydrocodone can be safely given.
- Hydrocodone and all narcotic drugs should be used carefully in animals with thyroid disease, kidney disease or Addison’s disease.
- Hydrocodone can also decrease the efficiency of the lungs. It should be used with caution in animals with pneumonia or other respiratory conditions where mucous needs to be coughed out. Because dogs and cats cannot sweat and use panting to cool themselves, hydrocodone should be used with caution in dogs and cats that are exposed to hot temperatures.
- The lungs are also used to eliminate acid from the blood, and hydrocodone should be used with caution in animals with too much acid in their blood (acidosis).
- Hydrocodone and other narcotics should also be used with caution in animals that have had head injuries as the side effects from these drugs may make it difficult to assess the extent of injuries to the brain.
- Other drugs that depress the brain or lungs may increase the effects of hydrocodone on these organs. You should tell your veterinarian about any other drugs that your pet may be receiving.
- Hydrocodone may mask coughs that are used to diagnose other diseases such as heartworm disease and should not be given without a veterinarian’s prescription.
- 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?
- Typical side effects from hydrocodone include sleepiness, constipation, and stomach upset.
- While some humans have become addicted to narcotics while taking this drug, this has not been reported in pets.

How Should It Be Given?
- Hydrocodone should be given with food to decrease stomach upset. It is generally given no more than four times daily.
- 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.
- If you miss a dose of this medication you should give it as soon as you remember it, but if it is within a few hours of the regularly scheduled dose, wait and give it at the regular time. Do not double a dose as this can be toxic to your pet.
- 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: Hydrocodone is usually given orally up to four times daily with food in dogs. It is not commonly used in cats. Do not give your pet aged cheese or use tick collars while on this drug.
- Horses: Hydrocodone is typically not used.

What Other Information Is Important About This Medication?
- Hydrocodone is a Class III Controlled substance and is controlled by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). You will need to get a new prescription for this medication every 6 months.
- Hydrocodone should be stored in a tight, light resistant, childproof container away from all children and other household pets.
- It should not be given to anyone other than the animal for which it was prescribed.