Hydroxyzine

Atarax® and Vistaril® are other names for this medication. Atarax® is hydroxyzine hydrochloride and Vistaril® is hydroxyzine pamoate.

How Is This Medication Useful

- Hydroxyzine is an antihistamine drug used to treat animals suffering from itching and inflammation usually caused by skin disease. Atopic dermatitis is a condition for which this drug is commonly prescribed. Some salts of hydroxyzine are considerably more expensive than others, but all salts are generally considered interchangeable in animals.

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

- Because of its effect of relaxing some types of muscle, hydroxyzine should not be used in animals with enlarged prostates, bladder blockage, severe heart disease or stomach obstruction.
- Hydroxyzine has also caused birth defects in laboratory animals and should probably not be used in pregnancy. It is not known if hydroxyzine gets into milk and should be used very carefully in nursing mothers.
- As hydroxyzine causes sedation, it should be used with extreme caution in working animals such as horses and dogs.
- Hydroxyzine has caused seizures in some dogs and probably should not be used in dogs with a history of seizures.
- 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 likely side effects are sedation and drowsiness. These side effects are generally mild and go away with time.
- Occasionally, hydroxyzine causes some animals to become overly excited. Some dogs will develop muscle tremors and seizures from this medication. Your veterinarian may want to try a test dose in your pet before long-term use, especially in horses.
- Cats have been reported to drink more water while receiving this drug and also experience behavior changes while receiving hydroxyzine.

How Should It Be Given?

- Hydroxyzine is usually given orally twice to three times daily in dogs, cats, horses and birds. It may be given with or without food.
- If your pet is a show animal or a working animal, you may want to try a test dose at home to see what effects the drug has. You may want to postpone any performances until the side effects have worn off.
- 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: Dogs and cats usually receive this drug orally twice to three times daily.

Horses: Horses usually receive this drug orally twice daily. It may be banned in some performance horses, so you should check your state or organizational guidelines prior to using in a performance or competition.

What Other Information Is Important About This Medication?

- Hydroxyzine is a Class 2 drug in the ARCI (Association of Racing Commissioners International) uniform classification guidelines.
- Hydroxyzine should be stored in a tight, light resistant, childproof container away from all children and other household pets.