Interferon

Intron® and Roferon-A® are other names for this medication.

How Is This Medication Useful?
- Interferon is used to treat certain cancers and viral diseases in dogs and cats. It has been used to control the signs and symptoms of herpes virus and feline leukemia in cats. Interferon has also been used to alleviate the symptoms of West Nile Virus infection in horses.

Are There Conditions or Times When Its Use Might Cause More Harm Than Good?
- Animals that have a history of allergy to interferon should not receive this medication.
- Although it is used to treat feline leukemia, interferon may also cause some anemias in cats and should be used cautiously in cats with severe anemias.
- 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?
- When given orally, adverse effects to interferon are uncommon. Some adverse effects that have been reported in cats are loss of appetite, anemia, fever, allergic reactions, bone marrow suppression and muscle pain.
- When injected into humans, interferon has caused nausea, vomiting, dizziness, low blood pressure, skin rashes and a “flu-like” syndrome. It is not known if animals experience these side effects.

How Should It Be Given?
- Interferon is supplied as an oral liquid or a topical solution for the eye when used in cats. When used for feline leukemia, it is usually given for 7 days, then stopped for 7 days and then repeated. It may be supplied as an injection to be given under the skin every 2-3 days in dogs with cancer. You should always keep interferon in the refrigerator and not shake it as this will destroy this very fragile drug. 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 usually receive this drug by injection 2-3 times weekly for cancer. Cats usually receive this drug orally or in the eye daily for alternating weeks of therapy followed by a drug “vacation” when treating feline leukemia or feline herpes.
- Horses: Horses have experimentally been treated with interferon after becoming infected with West Nile Virus. Adverse reactions in horses limit use of interferon to the veterinary clinic.

What Other Information Is Important About This Medication?
- Interferon should be stored in the refrigerator in a tight, light resistant, childproof container away from all children and other household pets.
- It should never be shaken or exposed to freezing or high temperatures.
- Solutions of interferon should be discarded after 30 days.