Pergolide

Pergolide is another name for this medication.

How Is This Medication Useful?
- Pergolide is used to control the signs and symptoms of Cushing's disease in horses. Horses with Cushing's do not make enough of the brain chemical dopamine. Dopamine controls the secretion of hormones from the pituitary gland, when dopamine is absent, the pituitary gland secretes too many hormones causing diabetes, lameness, and disruptions in the immune system. Pergolide acts like dopamine in the body.

Are There Conditions or Times When Its Use Might Cause More Harm Than Good?
- Pergolide comes from the plant family known as ergot alkaloids. It should not be used in patients who are known to be allergic to these types of plants.
- Pergolide can cause a significant drop in blood pressure when first starting out. It may make your horse "faint". You should know exactly how pergolide is going to affect your horse before using your horse for work or in a performance.
- It is not known whether pergolide is safe to use in pregnancy. It has been used in several pregnant mares without adverse effect, but some mares have also lost foals while taking pergolide. Foals born to mares taking pergolide will need a nurse mare, however, as pergolide will prevent milk letdown in the mare at foaling.
- The tranquilizing drug acepromazine (Promace®) will stop pergolide from acting like dopamine. Acepromazine should not be used regularly in horses on pergolide.
- Pergolide is removed from the body by the liver and kidneys and should be used very carefully in animals with liver or kidney failure.
- 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 commonly reported side effect in horses is decrease in or loss of appetite. This effect can be reduced by giving a lower dose.
- Pergolide may also cause stomach and intestinal upset and may cause symptoms of colic in your horse. You should contact your veterinarian immediately if you think your horse is colicking.
- Pergolide can cause a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- Pergolide in high doses can also cause horses to become agitated and unpredictable. Lowering the dose should help resolve this adverse effect. Some humans experience hallucinations while on pergolide and this may be why horses sometimes act "crazy" while taking this drug.
- Pergolide has also caused uncontrolled twitching of the tongue, facial muscles and head.
- When decreasing the dose, it must be done gradually as dropping the dose rapidly can cause hallucinations and behavior changes.

How Should It Be Given?
- Pergolide should be given orally to your horse once daily. It may be given as the tablets for humans, or your pharmacist may compound a flavored liquid or paste for your horse.
- 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.

Horses: Horses usually receive pergolide in doses from 0.25mg to 3mg per horse orally once daily. The horse will be on this medication for the rest of its life as the tumor causing problems in the pituitary is very difficult to remove with surgery and will not go away by itself.

What Other Information Is Important About This Medication?
- Pergolide should be stored in a tight, light resistant, childproof container away from all children and other household pets. It should never be stored at temperatures higher than 86°F, so you should keep it indoors during the hot parts of summer or in climates where the temperature exceeds 86°F. The barn is generally not a good place to store drugs.