

Theophylline

Slo-bid[®], Theobid[®], Slo-Phyllin[®], Theolair[®] are among the other names for this medication. Aminophylline and theophylline are equivalent drugs except dosages are figured differently.

How Is This Medication Useful?

- This medication is used to relax airways and help animals breathe better. It is used in conditions such as asthma or heaves. It is sometimes used with other medications in the treatment of symptoms of heart failure.

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

- Theophylline can cause the heart to beat too fast. It should be used with extreme caution in animals with irregular heartbeats or heart disease.
- Theophylline might also worsen the conditions of stomach ulcers, thyroid disease, kidney or liver disease or high blood pressure.
- Theophylline might take longer to get out of the bodies of very young or very old animals and should be used carefully in these patients.
- 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 theophylline are stomach upset and fast heartbeat. At the beginning of treatment, your animal may experience nervousness and stomach upset but these side effects usually go away as your animal's body gets used to the medication.
- Theophylline may cause some animals to eat more, drink more and urinate more.
- Horses may become more nervous, have a fast heartbeat, sweat and be unstable on their feet.
- In higher doses, some animals may have seizures.
- If you see any of these side effects in your animal, you should tell your veterinarian immediately.

How Should It Be Given?

- Theophylline should be given exactly as your veterinarian has told you. It can be dangerous in doses that are too high. You should never skip doses. If you accidentally forget to give a dose, you should never double the next dose to make up for it.

- 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. If you have difficulty giving any doses, please do not skip doses or stop giving the medication.
- 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:** Theophylline is usually given to dogs and cats twice or three times daily. It should be given exactly as the veterinarian has instructed. You should not crush tablets of long-acting theophylline as this may release too much drug into your pet's bloodstream at once and cause severe adverse effects. It is not unusual at the beginning of treatment for animals to experience nervousness or upset stomach from this drug. These side effects should go away in a short time. If these effects return after a while, you should tell your veterinarian immediately.
- **Horses:** This drug is banned for use in horses that are going to show or race. It is usually given two or three times daily and may be mixed in the feed. Horses may initially show nervousness, sweating, and fast heartbeat and may be unstable on their feet. These side effects will usually go away with time.

What Other Information Is Important About This Medication?

- This medication should be stored at room temperature and protected from extreme heat or freezing.
- **Horses:** This drug is banned by the ASHA and should not be used in show or race horses while they are performing.
- There are many different brands of long-acting theophylline. You should contact your veterinarian before switching brands once your animal is controlled. If you do receive a brand that your pet has not taken before, you should watch it for signs of adverse effects and take your pet to the clinic if necessary.