Warfarin

Counadin® is another name for this medication.

How Is This Medication Useful?

- Warfarin is a blood thinner used to prevent the formation of blood clots in animals with circulation problems.

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

- Because warfarin stops the clotting of blood, it should not be used in animals with bleeding problems (e.g., stomach ulcers, broken blood vessels) or that are about to undergo surgery.
- It should not be used in animals that are already anemic due to the increased risk for loss of blood.
- It should be used very cautiously in working animals or performance horses as the risk of uncontrollable bleeding from cuts and bruises is high.
- Warfarin should not be used in pregnant animals as it causes birth defects.
- Warfarin should not be used in animals with liver problems as it may build up in the body and cause uncontrollable bleeding.
- Warfarin affects and is affected by many different drugs and can cause fatal bleeding problems. You should tell your veterinarian about any drugs that your animal is taking.
- 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?

- Because warfarin stops clotting, it may cause nosebleeds, bruising and other bleeding problems that can lead to anemia.

How Should It Be Given?

- Warfarin should be given orally once daily.
- The active drug in commercially available warfarin tablets may be unevenly distributed. If your veterinarian prescribes ½ or ¼ tablets, then you should crush the whole tablet, mix up the powder and then give ½ or ¼ of the powder. It may be better to have your pharmacist compound capsules of the exact dose or formulate a liquid to achieve the correct dose.

- 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 warfarin orally once daily and should be checked weekly for the first month and then monthly while on the medication.

Horses: Warfarin is not usually given to horses, but can be given orally once daily. It is a Class 5 drug according to the Association of Racing Commissioners International (ARCI).

What Other Information Is Important About This Medication?

- Warfarin should be stored in a tight, light resistant, childproof container away from all children and other household pets.
- Your veterinarian will need to check blood clotting times periodically to make sure that your pet is not getting too much warfarin. It is very important to bring your pet back for these important visits.
- You should make sure that you pet does not cut itself or fight with other animals while on warfarin as it could suffer uncontrollable bleeding.