



Requirements of the Western Australian poisons legislation

Information for veterinary clinics and hospitals

Introduction

The primary legislative controls over the storage and supply of drugs in Schedules 4 and 8 (scheduled drugs) in Western Australia (WA) are contained in the *Poisons Act 1964* and the associated Poisons Regulations 1965. The WA legislation is available on the [State Law Publisher](#) website.

This fact sheet intended to assist staff in veterinary clinics and hospitals to comply with the WA Poisons legislation. The information is also applicable to those operating mobile veterinary practices.

Veterinary surgeons should be aware there are also controls over the use of scheduled drugs in the Veterinary Surgeons Regulations 1979.

Individual veterinary surgeons

An individual veterinary surgeon may order scheduled drugs for use in his/her professional practice at his/her registered veterinary clinic or hospital. The veterinary surgeon is responsible for the storage and record keeping associated with the use of these drugs. Approved veterinary nurses assisting the veterinary surgeon are authorised to access and use these drugs under the supervision of the veterinary surgeon.

Poisons permit

If the veterinary practice or hospital (as a business entity) wishes to purchase scheduled drugs on behalf of all veterinary surgeons at the practice, a poisons permit is required. A poisons permit authorises the holder of the permit to purchase Schedule 4 and 8 drugs on behalf of the veterinary clinic or hospital. A poisons permit is also required by veterinary surgeons who operate a mobile practice. The permit holder is responsible for ensuring compliance with all aspects of the Poisons Regulations including the purchase, storage, security and records of the supply and use of the scheduled drugs.

The key to the Schedule 8 safe must be kept in the personal possession of the permit holder at all times and only handed to another person when delegated by the permit holder.

Mobile veterinary practices (small/companion animal and large animal)

Mobile practices must obtain a poisons permit in order to purchase Schedule 4 and 8 drugs. When not being carried in the vehicle being used as a mobile veterinary clinic, the scheduled drugs must be stored in a locked cupboard or locked room. A locked refrigerator may also be required depending on the temperature storage requirements of the drugs. Schedule 8 drugs must be stored in an approved safe (see below for safe requirements).

Only the permit holder is permitted to access to the medicines. When scheduled drugs are stored at the veterinary surgeon's place of residence, no other household members may have access to the drugs.

The Veterinary Surgeons' Board has published guidelines about both [small/companion animal](#) and [large animal](#) mobile veterinary clinics. These guidelines contain additional information about the transport and use of scheduled drugs by veterinary surgeons conducting mobile practices. The guidelines are available on the [Veterinary Surgeons' Board](#) website.

Storage of Schedule 4 drugs at clinics and hospitals

Schedule 4 drugs are to be stored in locked cupboards and/or a locked room which is only accessible to the veterinary surgeon and approved veterinary nurses under their supervision. Unauthorised staff such as reception staff and cleaners must not be given unsupervised access to the drug storage cupboards and/or room.

Recording of Schedule 4 drugs

All use and supply of Schedule 4 drugs (prescription animal remedies) must be recorded in the veterinary surgeon's clinical records. Under the Poisons Regulations 1965, these records are required to be kept for a minimum of two years and must be available to officers authorised under the Poisons Act upon request.

Please note that Regulation 30 of the Veterinary Surgeons Regulations 1979 requires that these clinical records be kept for seven years.

Pharmaceutical samples

Professional samples given to a veterinary surgeon by a representative of a pharmaceutical company must be stored and recorded as for all other Schedule 4 drugs.

Labelling of Schedule 4 and 8 drugs

Scheduled drugs which are supplied by the veterinary surgeon to an animal's owner/carer to be taken away from the clinic/hospital must be labelled in accordance with the Poisons Regulations. The label must include:

- the words "Keep out of reach of children"
- the name and strength or amount of each drug in the preparation
- the owner's surname and the species of animal
- instructions for the use of the medicine
- the date of supply and a number identifying the entry in the veterinary surgeons' clinical records
- the name and address of the veterinary practice from which the supply is made
- the words "For veterinary use only" or "For animal treatment only"
- the words "For external use only" where applicable
- the total quantity contained in the package.

Storage of Schedule 8 drugs

Schedule 8 drugs must be stored in a safe. The safe described in the Poisons Regulations is larger and heavier than many veterinary clinics and hospitals will require. Veterinary clinics and hospitals may apply to the Pharmaceutical Services Branch for an exemption from the requirements of Appendix M of the Poisons Regulations to allow use of a smaller safe.

An exemption will be granted if the total stock holdings at the clinic or hospital are eight grams of S8 drugs or less. For quantities over this amount please contact the Pharmaceutical Services Branch for more information on appropriate safes.

Details of an acceptable safe for small quantities of S8 drugs can be found in the [Guidance Note on Safes](#) available on the Pharmaceutical Services Branch website.

The key to the safe is to be kept in the personal possession of a veterinary surgeon at all times. Veterinary nurses may only access Schedule 8 drugs under the supervision of a veterinary surgeon.

Recording Schedule 8 drugs

The veterinary surgeon is required to record the purchase, use and disposal of S8 drugs in an approved S8 register and also in their clinical records. The approved S8 register for veterinary surgeons is designated HA14 and is available from veterinary drug wholesalers located in WA.

All records relating to schedule 8 drugs must be kept for seven years and must be available to officers authorised under the Poisons Act upon request.

Monthly inventory of Schedule 8 drugs

An inventory of all S8 drugs must be carried out at least once a month. The inventory must be recorded in the S8 register on the day that the inventory is made. The stock on hand for each different S8 drug held should be recorded on the relevant page of the S8 register. It is not adequate to simply record that an overall inventory was made.

Any discrepancies between the quantity of drug on hand and the total in the register must be immediately investigated. If it becomes apparent that S8 drugs have been lost or stolen, the WA Police must be notified immediately. All discrepancies that remain unresolved within 24 hours of detection must be notified to the Pharmaceutical Services Branch.

Containers for scheduled drugs

A paper or plastic bag, envelope or cardboard box cannot be used as a container for loose medicines, whether dispensed or not. If the drugs are presented in foil strips or otherwise individually sealed in measured amounts, these types of containers can be used.

Disposal of Schedule 4 drugs

Schedule 4 drugs may only be supplied to authorised persons for disposal. The Department has issued a number of poisons permits to waste disposal companies for the collection and destruction of Schedule 4 drugs by incineration.

Disposal of Schedule 8 drugs

With the exception of partially used ampoules, S8 drugs may only be destroyed by both a veterinary surgeon and a witness. The witness must be a medical practitioner, pharmacist or authorised officer from the Department. A record of the destruction must be kept in the S8 register and must be signed and dated by both persons. The reason for the destruction (for example, out of date stock) must be recorded.

Prescription verification

The Poisons Regulations require that where a pharmacist is unfamiliar with the prescriber's handwriting and/or signature, they must contact the prescriber to verify any S8 prescriptions before dispensing. This requirement applies equally to prescriptions for humans and animals. All clinic/hospital staff, including reception staff, need to be aware of this requirement.

Human use of veterinary medicines

Veterinary surgeons are not authorised to purchase scheduled drugs with the intention that they are used by humans. Similarly supply of scheduled drugs for use by humans by a veterinary surgeon is prohibited. Poisons Regulation 33A also specifically prohibits the use by humans of any medicine prepared as an animal medicine.

Further information

Pharmaceutical Services Branch website www.health.wa.gov.au/pharmacy

Email correspondence should be directed to poisons@health.wa.gov.au

If you need to telephone the Pharmaceutical Services Branch please call (08) 9222 6883 and follow the prompts. The Branch is open between 8.30am and 4.30pm Monday to Friday.

Prepared April 2014