

Fatty Acids, Omega-3

Description:

Nutritional supplement; Fish oil

Other Names for this Medication:

Eicosaderm[®], Dermapet[®], Welactin[®], AllerG-3[®]

Common Dosage Forms:

Veterinary: Oral solutions and capsules are available in many sizes. **Human:** There are many fish oil capsules available without prescription in various trade names.

This information sheet does not contain all available information for this medication and has not been reviewed by FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine. This sheet can help answer commonly asked questions but is not a substitute for medical advice. If you have other questions or need more information about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.

Key Information

- Omega fatty acids are also known as *fish oils*.
- Often used in addition to other treatments for controlling skin diseases, arthritis, and some heart conditions.
- Upset stomach and loose stools/diarrhea are the most common side effects, especially when high doses are used.
- Some patients may bruise or bleed more easily.

How is this medication useful?

Fatty acids have many uses in dogs and cats. In dogs, they may be used to improve the hair coat and relieve itching associated with allergies (atopy) and other types of inflammatory skin conditions. Improvement in these conditions may not be noticed until after 2-3 months of treatment. Other uses for dogs include osteoarthritis as well as certain forms of kidney disease and heart disease. In cats, essential fatty acids may be beneficial in patients with heart failure.

Fatty acids are considered a nutritional supplement by the FDA; the FDA does not evaluate these products for safety or efficacy. For your animal's safety, use only products recommended by your veterinarian. You and your veterinarian can discuss why this type of supplement is an appropriate choice for your animal.

What should I tell my veterinarian to see if this medication can be safely given?

Many things might affect how well this drug will work in your animal. Be sure to discuss the following with your veterinarian so together you can make the best treatment decisions.

- Other drugs can interact with fatty acids, so be sure to tell your veterinarian and pharmacist what medications (including vitamins, supplements, or herbal therapies) you give your animal, including the amount and time you give each.
- Tell your veterinarian about any conditions or diseases your animal may have now or has had in the past.
- If your animal has been treated for the same disease or condition in the past, tell your veterinarian about the treatment and how well it did or didn't work.
- If your animal is pregnant or nursing, talk to your veterinarian about the risks of using this drug.
- Tell your veterinarian and pharmacist about any medication side effects (including allergic reactions, lack of appetite, diarrhea, itching, hair loss) your animal has developed in the past.

How long until I will know if this medication is working, and how long will the effects of this medication last?

This medication takes several doses before you will see any effect. The medication's full effects may not be evident until your animal has taken it consistently for several weeks, but you will see a gradual improvement of your animal's clinical signs until the medication becomes fully effective. The effects of this medication are moderate in duration, meaning they may last for a few days.

When should this medication not be used or be used very carefully?

No drug is 100% safe in all patients, but your veterinarian will discuss with you any specific concerns about using this drug in your animal.

This drug **SHOULD NOT** be used in:

- Animals that are allergic to it.

This drug should be used **WITH CAUTION** in patients:

- That are pregnant.
- With bleeding disorders, or are taking anticoagulant drugs ("blood thinners").
- That have had prior bouts of pancreatitis or prolonged diarrhea.
- Currently eating a diet already supplemented with high amounts of essential fatty acids.

If your animal has any of these conditions, talk to your veterinarian about the potential risks versus benefits.

What are the side effects of this medication?

In dogs and cats, essential fatty acids are normally tolerated well.

Side effects that usually are not serious include:

- Low energy level.
- Loose stools or diarrhea.

You don't have to be overly concerned if you see any of these signs unless they are severe, worsen, or continue to be a problem. Contact your veterinarian if this happens.

Side effects that may be serious or indicate a serious problem:

- Bleeding or excessive bruising.

If you see any of these signs, contact your veterinarian immediately.

If my animal gets too much of this medication (an overdose), what should I do?

If you witness or suspect an overdose, contact your veterinarian or an animal poison control center for further advice. Animal poison control centers that are open 24 hours a day include: **Pet Poison HELPLINE** (855-764-7661) and **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center** (888-426-4435); a consultation fee is charged for these services.

How should this medication be given?

For this medication to work, give it exactly as your veterinarian has prescribed. It's a good idea to always check the prescription label to be sure you are giving the drug correctly.

- When given by mouth, essential fatty acids may be given either with food or on an empty stomach. If your animal vomits or acts sick after receiving the drug on an empty stomach, try giving the next dose with food or a small treat. If vomiting continues, contact your veterinarian.
- Liquid forms of this medication must be measured carefully. Your veterinarian or pharmacist can help by providing special measuring spoons or syringes.
- If you have difficulty getting your animal to take the medicine, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist for tips to help with dosing and reducing the stress of medication time.
- Patients are usually on this medication for an extended period, often for the rest of their lives. Give this medication according to the label's instructions and obtain refills as needed. Before stopping this medication, talk to your veterinarian, as there may be important reasons to continue its use.

What should I do if I miss giving a dose of this medication?

If you miss a dose, give it when you remember, but if it is close to the time for the next dose, either, 1) skip the dose you missed and give it at the next scheduled time then return to the regular dosing schedule, OR 2) give it when you remember and then wait the amount of time between doses recommended by your veterinarian before giving another dose. Do not double-up or give extra doses.

How should I store this medication?

- Store this medication in the original prescription bottle or an approved dosage reminder container (ie, pill minder) at room temperature and protected from light and moisture.
- If your veterinarian or pharmacist has made (compounded) a special formulation for your animal, follow the storage recommendations and expiration date for the product.
- Keep away from children and other animals.

Can handling this medication be hazardous to me, my family, or other animals?

There are no specific precautions required when handling this medication unless you are allergic to it, but it is always a good idea to wash your hands after handling any medication. If you are allergic to the medication, wear gloves when handling.

How should I dispose of this medication if I don't use it all?

- Do not flush this medication down the toilet or wash it down the sink. If a community drug "take-back" program is available, use this option. If there is no take-back program, mix the drug with coffee grounds or cat litter (to make it undesirable to children and animals and unrecognizable to people who might go through your trash), place the mixture in a sealable plastic bag to keep it from leaking out, and throw the bag out with the regular trash.
- Do not save leftover medication for future use or give it to others to use.

What other information is important for this medication?

Use of this drug may not be allowed in certain animal competitions. Check rules and regulations before entering your animal in a competition while this medication is being administered.

If you have any other questions about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.