Medication: How to Keep the Doctor Away

You may be asked to administer medications to your foster pet. Proper administration is essential for the foster animal(s) to receive maximum benefit from the prescribed treatment.

**MEDICATIONS SHOULD ALWAYS BE GIVEN ACCORDING TO THE PRESCRIPTION AND FOR THE FULL DURATION OF THE TREATMENT EVEN IF THE FOSTER ANIMAL(S) SEEMS BETTER.**

**Pills**  When giving pills, tilt the animal’s head back, gently open its mouth and drop the pill to the back of its throat. Gently hold the animal’s mouth closed, with its head pointed straight up, and blow on its nose to make it swallow. As an alternative, pills may be given in a small piece of cheese, hot dog or canned food (this does not usually work in cats). Visit www.vet.cornell.edu/fhc to see an instructional video on how to give a cat oral medication.

**Pastes**  For dogs, the easiest way to administer a paste is to place the appropriate amount as a ribbon on your finger, open the dog’s mouth and smear the paste on the roof of its mouth. If the paste is pre-measured in a syringe, you can place it on the dog’s tongue where it will adhere and be swallowed.

For cats, you may try the same methods as for dogs, or an alternative method is to place the paste on the cat’s front leg so the cat will lick it off. Since the dosage is not always accurate this way, only use this method for medications that do not have to be measured exactly.

**Liquids**  For cats, tilt the head back, open the mouth and slowly dribble the liquid from a syringe or dropper onto the back of the cat’s tongue. If the cat coughs or sputters, decrease the amount of the head tilt. If the medication is bitter tasting, the cat may foam at the mouth.

For dogs, liquids may be administered in one of two ways. You can tilt the dogs head back, open its mouth and dribble the liquid onto the back of its tongue with a dropper or syringe. If the dog coughs or sputters, decrease the degree of the head tilt. Or, you can tilt the dog’s head back slightly, hook the side of its cheek out to form a pouch and slowly dribble the liquid into the pouch with a syringe or dropper, allowing the dog to swallow.

**Eye Drops & Ointment**  To administer drops, tilt the animal’s head back slightly, bring the bottle of drops over the eye and drop in the prescribed amount.

To administer ointment, tilt the animal’s head back slightly, squeeze a small amount of ointment inside the lower eyelid and close the eye to distribute the ointment evenly over the surface of the eye.

When administering drops or ointment to a cat, it may be necessary to have someone assist you by holding the cat, or you may want to wrap the cat securely in a towel or pillowcase.

Be sure to rest the hand holding the drops or ointment on the head of the animal to prevent injury should the animal jerk or move.

**Ear Drops & Ointment**  Grasp the tip of the ear with one hand and hold the ear flap out. With the other hand, drop in the prescribed number of drops or amount of ointment. Continue to hold the ear firmly to prevent the head from shaking and massage the base of the ear to work the medication down inside the ear canal.