



NEED  
Pet Meds?



Protect  
Yourself  
and Your Pet —

Be Website **A.W.A.R.E.**

FDA



**Pet medicines—your pet needs them, and they can be expensive.** You've seen advertisements for online pharmacies and retail websites that promise lower prices than your veterinarian's office, **but are they trustworthy?** Not all websites that sell pet medicines may be what they seem. Just as with any other Internet website, you should know what red flags to look for so you can protect yourself and your pet.

***Do your homework and be website A.W.A.R.E.***

- A**— Ask your veterinarian
- W**— Watch for red flags
- A**— Always check if and where the pharmacy is licensed
- R**— Report problems
- E**— Educate yourself

**For more information about purchasing medicines from online pharmacies visit:**

# A—Ask Your Veterinarian

Before you buy online, talk with your veterinarian! Your veterinarian is a reliable resource when it comes to all aspects (including cost) of your pet's specific medication needs.

## Your veterinarian:

- physically examines your pet and knows if your pet has any health issues,
- knows which medicines your pet has taken in the past and which medicines your pet is currently on,
- knows which medicines are safe for your pet,
- educates you about potential side effects of your pet's medicines,
- shows you how to properly use the medicines prescribed for your pet,
- knows whether your pet needs a change in the dose of a medicine,
- knows whether your pet needs blood tests or a check-up, and
- obtains products from legitimate sources so you can be sure the product is authentic.



<https://www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary>, or call FDA at (240) 402-7002

# **W—Watch for Red Flags**

*When buying your pet's medicines from a website, watch for red flags. Be careful if...*

- **the website doesn't require a veterinarian's prescription for a prescription veterinary medicine.**

Websites that sell prescription veterinary medicines without requiring a veterinarian's prescription are breaking the law. Under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, a pharmacy or other website can't sell you a prescription veterinary medicine without a valid prescription from a licensed veterinarian. These sites should ask you for the prescription from your veterinarian or verify it by contacting the animal hospital directly.

- **the online pharmacy has no licensed pharmacist available to answer your questions.**

Can someone answer your questions about your pet's medicines? Some online pharmacies may

not be prepared to answer your questions, or they may have limited knowledge about medicines for animals.

- **the pharmacy's website does not list its physical business address, phone number, or other contact information.**

A legitimate online pharmacy lists its physical U.S. address, U.S. phone number, and other contact information on its website.

- **the website does not protect your personal or financial information.**

Make sure the website is secure before you share your credit card number and other personal or financial information. Look for and read the website's privacy and security policies. If there are none or you don't understand them, that's a red flag. Keep yourself safe from identity and financial theft!

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- **the website's prices are much lower than your veterinarian's or other online pharmacies' prices.**

If it seems too good to be true, then it probably is. Suspiciously cheap medicines may be unapproved knock-offs, from another country (sometimes with the label in a language other than English), or expired.

- **the website ships you medicines you didn't order or medicines that look different from what your pet normally takes.**

Don't give these medicines to your pet—contact your veterinarian and the website's customer service department immediately!

- **the website does not accept credit cards, only Bitcoin or payment through money transfer websites.**

If you pay with Bitcoin or a money transfer and there's a problem with your order, you will likely

have difficulty getting your money back. If you pay with a credit card and there's a problem, the credit card company may be able to help you through the charge dispute process.



## A—Always Check If and Where the Online Pharmacy Is Licensed

***Do you know if the online pharmacy you're using is licensed in the U.S.?*** U.S. pharmacies must be licensed by the state board of pharmacy or similar agency in the state where they are based and where they fill prescriptions. To find out whether the pharmacy is appropriately licensed, contact your state board of pharmacy or state government. You can find the contact information for the state boards of pharmacy by visiting **FDA's Locate a State-Licensed Online Pharmacy** webpage, finding your state in the list, and clicking on the link.



## R—Report Problems

If there is a problem with your pet's medicine that you bought from either an online pharmacy or other retail website (for example, your pet has a bad side effect, the medicine isn't working, or it looks different than usual), contact your veterinarian first. To report problems with a veterinary medicine, you can contact the company that makes the medicine. You can also report problems directly to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). For information on how to report problems with a veterinary medicine, visit: <https://www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary/safety-health/report-problem>.



For more information about purchasing medicines from online pharmacies visit:

Report suspicious online pharmacies to FDA at:  
<https://www.fda.gov/safety/report-problem-fda-reporting-unlawful-sales-medical-products-internet>, or to your state board of pharmacy.

If you have a problem with your order, you can contact the following organizations for help:

- Better Business Bureau (for businesses in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico):  
<https://www.bbb.org/file-a-complaint>
- Federal Trade Commission (for businesses located both in the U.S. and in other countries):  
<https://reportfraud.ftc.gov/#/> or by phone at (202) 326-2222
- Your credit card company, if you've purchased the medicines with your credit card.

If you buy your pet's medicines from an online pharmacy or retail website based outside the U.S. and have a problem with your order, be aware that you may not be able to get your money back.

## E—Educate Yourself

The best defense you have when buying your pet's medicines online is to do your homework and be website A.W.A.R.E. Protect yourself and your pet—**an informed consumer is an empowered consumer.**



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**Remember:**

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**For more information, visit:  
U.S. Food and Drug Administration**  
[\(240\) 402-7002](https://www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary)

**American Veterinary Medical Association**  
<https://www.avma.org/resources/pet-owners/petcare/online-pharmacies>



**U.S. FOOD & DRUG  
ADMINISTRATION**