



3 November 2011

**Addendum to the 2011 Circular to Veterinary Surgeons in Tasmania PSB 1663 issued by the Chief Pharmacist Pharmaceutical Services Branch Department of Health and Human Services:**

***“Clients who may be seeking drugs which are subject to misuse”***

Pharmaceutical Services Branch (PSB) monitors closely the prescribing and dispensing of S8 substances and declared restricted substances (SD4s) to persons; and in accordance with the *Poisons Act 1971* may, if necessary, restrict or prohibit the prescribing of these substances to certain persons.

The circular recommended caution when prescribing psychoactive medication such as barbiturates and benzodiazepines for animals and recommended that if a veterinary surgeon has concerns about the person/owner seeking the medication, that they contact PSB on **6233 2064** before prescribing or supplying the substances.

PSB has provided clarification on a number of issues as follows:

**Q: What are the specific requirements to "inform owners of safe storage"?**

A: Essentially the message is that all medicines, human and veterinary, should be stored out of reach of children. This is usually done by storage out of reach, in a high cupboard and/or using a child resistant latch on any cupboard.

**Q: PSB recommended that ‘limited supplies’ of barbiturates be given in the interests of the safety of clients and their families. What is an appropriate amount?**

A: There is concern that phenobarbitone is often supplied in packs of 200 tablets. The lethal human dose is around 1,500mg (50x 30mg tablets). It is recommended that in any case where there is concern about misuse that a number well below the lethal dose is supplied e.g. no more than 25 tablets at a time. If it is inconvenient for an owner to return to the surgery the drug might be supplied on prescription through a pharmacy with regular pickup specified on the prescription.

**Q: PSB states that barbiturates are rarely used in human medicine. Does this mean that it will cease to be available to veterinary surgeons and is it recommended that other medications be used?**

A: Phenobarbitone is now infrequently used in human medicine. Removal of access of veterinary surgeons to such a drug would be an extraordinary step and is not under consideration. It may be appropriate after consideration of all the risks and benefits (to both the owner and the animal) that other medication is considered where an alternative exists.