

Are Single Doses Killing Your Compliance?

Poor dispensing practices are costing you money and risking patients' health

By Wendy S. Myers



At a busy walk-in clinic outside of Atlanta, a wall-mounted dispenser stores single doses of every brand of preventative on the market. Each time receptionists break open a pack to fill the bins of single doses, they record opened packs in a log. The inventory manager is frustrated that single doses never reconcile.

Although parasite products are in high demand at this five-doctor hospital, single-dose dispensing is killing compliance. During my consultation, I found that 19% of preventatives were sold as single doses—that's nearly 1 in 5. Only 43% of dogs were getting year-round protection, with 5 months as the average number of doses sold per active dog. Among cats, only 12% were on preventatives year-round, and one month was the average number of doses. The choices of multiple brands and single dosing was confusing clients and wrecking compliance.

Why you shouldn't sell single doses

Some practice owners and managers argue that single dosing is a necessary strategy in today's economy. But are you costing clients more money in the long run? Single dosing is sporadic at best, with clients repurchasing only after they've seen fleas or "just remembered" that the dog needs its heartworm pill. Breaks in prevention could lead to flea-allergy dermatitis, hot spots, intestinal parasites, zoonotic risks, heartworm disease, and expensive treatments.

Here's why you shouldn't sell single doses:

- Internet pharmacies don't sell singles.
- VCA and Banfield hospitals nationwide don't sell singles.
- Staff labor is costly to track, break packages, and dispense singles.
- Clients should be called at Day 20 before the next dose must be purchased and given at Day 30.
- Client satisfaction declines if the perception is that the product isn't working, even though inconsistent use may be to blame.
- Manufacturers' guarantees may be void for singles.
- If your hospital recommends year-round protection, a single dose contradicts your standard of care.
- Simply put, single doses are bad medicine and bad for business!

So how do you get rid of single doses?

Reward clients with greater savings on 12 packs. At a southern California practice, the cost per dose on a 12 pack is 30 percent less than a single tablet. Clients pay \$16.25 for a single dose compared to \$12.50 per dose in a 12 pack. That's a savings of \$45 for a year's supply. Another bonus: If clients buy a year's supply, they likely won't look online for better prices.

Use internal promotions to boost sales of packs. Place a sign on the counter that says "Ask me how to save 30% on your pet's preventatives today!" Put stickers on reminder cards that say "Save 30% when you buy a year's supply of parasite preventatives for your pet." Send e-mail reminders to promote savings such as "Got fleas? We can get rid of them now. Save 30% when you buy a year's supply for constant protection of your best friend."

Turn your lost-and-found bulletin board into an educational center. Move lost pet notices into a



notebook that's placed on a bench in the reception area. Now use the bulletin board for product promotion. Post a question such as "Did you know that year-round parasite protection is just 42 cents a day?" Make comparisons to items clients frequently purchase. For example, have a headline that says the cost of year-round prevention is...42 cents a day, less than a postage stamp...\$2.94 a week, less than a latte at Starbucks...\$13.02, less than a large pizza at Papa John's.

Only stock packs of preventatives. At VCA and Banfield hospitals nationwide, six packs are the smallest quantities available. Follow their lead and stock six and 12 packs of heartworm preventatives. For topical flea products, carry three, six and 12 packs. Set prices so 12 packs are the lowest cost per dose, followed by six packs and then three doses. Remember, you don't sell single doses of NSAIDs or antibiotics because pets need more than one dose to resolve the problem. The same is true for preventatives.

Promote the "buy six, get one free" bonus. This lowers the price even more for topicals such as Frontline Plus. When checking out clients, ask "Would you like to get a free dose of Frontline Plus valued at \$20 when you buy a six pack?"

When you stop selling single doses, you promote year-round protection for pets, protect practice profits, and provide patients with better medicine. Take the risk for the health of your patients and practice. Stop selling single doses.

How to Measure Your Compliance

Measuring your compliance for preventatives will help you understand where you are today and allow you to make positive changes to improve compliance. Share results of your compliance audit with your entire team. Then brainstorm ways to educate clients so more pets experience optimal wellness. Reassess your compliance quarterly and post results so your team can determine the most effective strategies—and see results!

Gather the following data from veterinary software reports. You may need to call your software provider to identify which reports or queries you need to run to get accurate data.

1. Active patients

- Number of active dogs age 1 and older that have had a veterinary visit within the last 12 months (excludes puppies that would not have yet had a heartworm test and year's supply of preventatives) = _____
- Number of active cats age 1 and older that have had a veterinary visit within the last 12 months (excludes kittens that would not have yet had a year's supply of preventatives) = _____
- Total number of active dogs and cats = _____

2. Heartworm testing

- Number of heartworm tests performed in the last 12 months = _____
- Heartworm testing fee = \$_____

3. Heartworm preventatives sold

List all brands by sizes sold within the last 12 months. Multiply by six for six packs and by 12 for 12 packs to get the number of doses. List all brands you carry that protect pets from heartworms and intestinal parasites.

Heartworm preventatives for dogs

Product	Doses sold
Advantage Multi for Dogs, 3-9 lbs.	
Advantage Multi for Dogs, 9-20 lbs.	
Advantage Multi for Dogs, 20-55 lbs.	
Advantage Multi for Dogs, 55-88 lbs.	
Advantage Multi for Dogs total	
Heartgard Plus, 1-25 lbs.	
Heartgard Plus, 26-50 lbs.	
Heartgard Plus, 51-100 lbs.	
Heartgard Plus total	
Interceptor, 1-10 lbs.	
Interceptor, 11-25 lbs.	
Interceptor, 26-50 lbs.	
Interceptor, 51-100 lbs.	
Interceptor total	



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Product continued	Doses sold
Iverhart Plus, 1-25 lbs.	
Iverhart Plus, 26-50 lbs.	
Iverhart Plus, 51-100 lbs.	
Iverhart Plus total	
Revolution for Dogs, 5-10 lbs.	
Revolution for Dogs, 11-20 lbs.	
Revolution for Dogs, 20-40 lbs.	
Revolution for Dogs, 41-85 lbs.	
Revolution for Dogs, 86-130 lbs.	
Revolution for Dogs total	
Sentinel, 1-10 lbs.	
Sentinel, 11-25 lbs.	
Sentinel, 26-50 lbs.	
Sentinel, 51-100 lbs.	
Sentinel total	
Tri-Heart Plus, 1-25 lbs.	
Tri-Heart Plus, 26-50 lbs.	
Tri-Heart Plus, 51-100 lbs.	
Tri-Heart Plus total	
TOTAL DOSES FOR DOGS	

Heartworm preventatives for cats

Product	Doses sold
Advantage Multi for Cats	
Heartgard for Cats	
Interceptor (only if dispensed to cats)	
Revolution for Cats	
TOTAL DOSES FOR CATS	

Compliance calculations

Heartworm Preventative Compliance for Dogs	Your results
1. Active dogs age 1 and older	
2. # of heartworm tests performed in last 12 months	
3. % of dogs getting annual HW test (Line 2 divided by line 1.)	%
4. Total doses of HW preventatives for dogs	
5. Dogs on year-round HW protection (Line 4 divided by 12 months.)	
6. % of dogs on year-round protection (Line 5 divided by Line 1.)	%
7. Average # of months of doses (Line 6 x 12 months.)	
8. Compliance goal for % of dogs on year-round protection	%
9. Potential number of additional doses to sell ((Line 1 x Line 8) minus Line 5) x 12 months.	
10. Average cost per dose of HWP	\$
11. Preventative revenue opportunity for dogs (Line 9 x Line 10.)	\$
12. Compliance goal for % of dogs getting an annual HW test	%
13. Potential number of additional HW tests to sell ((Line 1 x Line 12) minus Line 2.)	
14. Average cost for HW test	\$
15. HW testing revenue opportunity for dogs (Line 13 x Line 14.)	\$
REVENUE OPPORTUNITY FOR DOGS (Line 11 + Line 15.)	\$

Heartworm Preventative Compliance for Cats	Your results
1. Active cats age 1 and older	
2. Total doses of HW preventatives for cats	
3. Cats on year-round HW protection (Line 2 divided by 12 months.)	
4. % of cats on year-round protection (Line 3 divided by Line 1.)	%
5. Average # of months of doses (Line 4 x 12 months.)	
6. Compliance goal for % of cats on year-round protection	%
7. Potential number of additional doses to sell ((Line 1 x Line 6) minus Line 3) x 12 months.)	
8. Average cost per dose of HWP for cats	\$
9. Preventative revenue opportunity for cats (Line 7 x Line 8.)	\$
REVENUE OPPORTUNITY FOR CATS	\$

About the Author:



Wendy S. Myers owns Communication Solutions for Veterinarians in Denver. Her consulting firm helps teams improve compliance, client service and practice management. Communication Solutions for Veterinarians has provided mystery phone shopper training to more than 2,600 receptionists nationwide. Wendy is a partner in Animal Hospital Specialty Center, a 13-doctor AAHA-accredited referral practice offering internal medicine, surgery, neurology, oncology, specialty dentistry, and emergency care in Highlands Ranch, Colorado. She is the author of four books and five videos. Subscribe to Communication Solutions for Veterinarians' e-newsletter on our website at: www.csvets.com. E-mail Wendy at: wmyers@csvets.com.