

# Appendix 13

## Medicating Your Cat

### Mixing in Food

Liquids and powders can be easily mixed in with food. Small pills and tablets can also be hidden but larger tablets might need to be crushed. Some pills or tablets must be given whole, however, so always check with your vet and/or read the instructions you have been given before attempting to crush or break up a pill or tablet. Also check to ensure that the medication can be given with food.

Before attempting to give your cat his medication in food:

- Experiment to find a suitable food that your cat enjoys. All cats are different and not all cats will like the same food.
- If your cat has been prescribed a special diet or your vet has advised certain dietary restrictions, check with your vet to find out what food your cat can and cannot be given.
- It is often best to choose a food that is soft so that the medication can be easily mixed in with it. Food with a strong taste and smell will be better at disguising the taste and smell of the medication. Warming the food slightly to around body temperature can also increase the smell and make the food more attractive to the cat.
- Think about when and how often each day you will need to medicate your cat and start feeding him a small amount of this ‘special’ food at these times without any medication in it. This will teach him to expect a special treat at these times and reduce any suspicions he may have about a change in routine and being offered new food.
- Always feed the special treat before any other food so that your cat is hungry.
- The tablet can be crushed using a ‘pill crusher’ made especially for this purpose. You can see how to use one of these by watching the following video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWtnPyPQKaY>. When you mix the medication into the food, ensure that there is sufficient food to disguise the medication but not so much that some of the food remains unmedicated and is eaten in preference to the medicated food.
- The medicated food can be given in a bowl or fed to the cat on the end of a spoon.
- Another option is to use food treats that are specially made for this purpose. These are usually semi-soft and designed so that a pill can be hidden inside. Similarly, something like cheese or other soft treats can be moulded around the pill or tablet. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Pqdcx0fQQU> as to how to do this.

## Physically Medicating the Cat

If a pill or tablet cannot be given with food and the only option is to physically medicate the cat, this is best if carried out by two people: one to hold the cat and the other to give the medication.

### Advice for the person holding the cat

- Place the cat on a table or work surface that is covered with a towel or blanket.
- The cat should be facing away from you.
- Hold the cat into your body to prevent him from moving backwards and gently hold each leg just above the elbow, so that he is prevented from moving forward, or lifting his front legs.
- Using a towel:
  - Place the cat on top of a large towel.
  - Wrap the towel gently but firmly around the cat so that only his head is free.
  - Hold the cat as described above.

### Advice for the person giving the pill or tablet

- Have the pill ready between your finger and thumb of your right hand (if you are right-handed).
- Using your other hand, place it over the cat's head so that your finger and thumb rest at the corners of the cat's mouth.
- Tilt the cat's head back slightly and by applying gentle pressure on the cat's lower incisors with a free finger of your right hand gently pull the lower jaw down and open the cat's mouth.
- Place or drop the pill as far back on the cat's tongue as you can.
- Lower the cat's head.
- Encourage the cat to swallow by syringing or spooning a little water into the side of his mouth. Do not squirt water directly down the back of the cat's throat. Giving the cat a small tasty food treat can also help to ensure that the medication has been swallowed.
- To see how to give a cat a pill or tablet watch the following video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6\\_W0KTjEINs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_W0KTjEINs)

### Using a pill-giver or pill-popper

This is a syringe-like device that holds a pill or tablet and can be used to easily deposit it at the back of the cat's tongue, without needing to put your fingers into the cat's mouth. The following video demonstrates how to correctly use a pill-popper: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkq\\_HKA7drA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkq_HKA7drA)

### Gelatine capsules

Empty gelatine capsules may be available via your vet practice that can be used to disguise the taste of bitter pills and can be very useful if multiple pills or tablets need

to be given at the same time. These must always be washed down with water to prevent them from sticking in the cat's throat. Ensure that they are the correct size and do not make the medication too big for your cat to swallow easily.

### Coating with butter

Coating with oil or butter may make a pill or tablet easier for the cat to swallow and may also help to disguise the taste.

### Liquid Medication

Liquid medication or tablets crushed in water should be syringed or spooned into the side of the cat's mouth in small incremental amounts of around 0.5ml, as this is as much as a cat can comfortably swallow.

### Applying a Spot-on Treatment

- It can help to prepare your cat well in advance by gently parting the hair at the back of his neck and then giving him a food treat while you are stroking him.
- Once the cat is unconcerned about having the hair on the back of his neck parted, dampen your finger and touch your wet finger on the cat's neck where the hair is parted and then give him a treat. This should allow him to become accustomed to the feeling of something wet on his neck.
- It can also help when you do apply the spot-on to warm it first by carrying it in your pocket for a while before applying it.
- Apply the treatment high up on the cat's neck so that he cannot lick it.
- If the cat needs to be restrained, do so as described previously.
- To see how to apply a spot-on treatment watch the following video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKlm-wGV2TU>.
- Before you apply any spot-on treatment it is essential to make sure that it is suitable for cats, as some spot-on treatments for dogs can be highly toxic for cats.

If you continue to have difficulty in medicating your cat, speak to your vet or vet nurse/technician. They might be able to help you to medicate your cat, or your vet might be able to prescribe a different product containing the same or a similar medication in a form that is more palatable or easier to administer.

The video links in this appendix are from International Cat Care – <https://www.icatcare.org>. Other helpful cat-handling videos can be accessed via: <https://icatcare.org/advice/cat-handling-videos> or via the iCatCare YouTube page: <https://m.youtube.com/user/iCatCare>.

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