

## FDA Urges Caution With Online Pet Pharmacies

**The agency advises owners to consult with their vets before buying pet medications online.**

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The U.S. Food and Drug Administration urges pet owners who shop for prescription pet medicines online to make sure they remain A.W.A.R.E. of exactly what they are buying.

There is no foolproof way to tell if an online pharmacy is legal, according to the FDA. To help pet owners protect their pets, the agency provides the following guidelines:

**A – Ask your veterinarian.**

Before buying online, talk with a veterinarian. Some questions the FDA suggests owners ask their vets are: “Do you trust the Internet pharmacy site?”, “Have you ever worked with the company?”, and “Have other clients used that site?” If any of the answers are “yes,” what were the veterinarian’s experiences?

**W – Watch for red flags.**

Some warning signs include: the site does not require veterinary prescriptions for prescription drug orders; the site has no licensed pharmacist available to answer questions; the site does not list physical business address, phone number or other contact information; the site is not based in the U.S.; the site is not licensed by the State Board of Pharmacy where the business is based; the site does not protect your personal information.

**A – Always check for site accreditation.**

In 2009, the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy created a voluntary accreditation program called Veterinary-Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites. This program helps identify online pharmacy sites legally selling veterinary prescription products.

**R – Report problems and suspicious online pharmacies.**

If a pet has a problem with or reaction to a medicine purchased online, contact the medicine’s maker. To report adverse drug events directly to FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine call 888-FDA-VETS. For a copy of the reporting form (FDA Form 1932a) and for more information on how to report problems, visit the FDA’s website.

**E – Educate yourself about online pharmacies.**

The best defense against illegal online pharmacies is education. Conduct research and be online pharmacy A.W.A.R.E. before buying medicines online, the FDA said.