

Clinical features of methadone constant rate infusions in 383 dogs and cats

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OBJECTIVES

To describe the clinical features – indications for use, rates of infusion, perceived effect on pain levels, and side effects – of methadone constant rate infusions (CRIs) in dogs and cats in a first-opinion charity hospital over the last two years.

METHODS

Retrospective analysis of clinical histories of 152 dogs and 230 cats that received a methadone CRI.

RESULTS

The most common indications were trauma (67% of dogs, 80% of cats) or orthopaedic surgery (22% of dogs, 16% of cats). Most animals were given a loading dose of methadone (median 0.4mg/kg, range 0.2–0.8mg/kg) followed by CRI (median 0.1mg/kg/hr, range 0.05–0.2mg/kg/h). The effect on pain levels were judged clinically to be excellent (83% of dogs, 91% of cats) or very good (15% of dogs, 6% of cats). Side effects were rare in dogs, in the main being linked to nausea or vomiting. Cats frequently (42%) showed dysphoria, leading to a reduction in dose or cessation of the CRI. No side effects of mental or cardiorespiratory depression were seen in any animal.

STATEMENT

Methadone CRIs can provide excellent analgesia in hospitalised dogs and cats that are experiencing, or likely to experience, severe pain. Side effects appear mild and responsive to a reduction in dose; serious side effects were not documented in this study.