



## ADMINISTRATION OF TABLETS

Many drugs in tablet form, licensed for use in dogs, have been specially formulated with palatability in mind. However, if your dog is at all suspicious he is unlikely to eat the tablet voluntarily irrespective of how pleasant it may taste.

### **Can I train my dog to take tablets?**

Yes, it is good foresight to train a puppy to accept tablets pushed down the throat. This is a useful technique to practice with a puppy using something pleasant like a small treat.

### **My dog has never had a tablet - how can I get them into him?**

Try subterfuge to start! Most dogs readily accept soft treats. Try giving him one or two and then give one with the tablet pushed into the centre. You may be successful. Make it a game and a lot of the problems will be solved. If necessary push the tablet disguised in the treat down the throat.

### **You say push the tablets down the throat. How do I do this?**

Remember that dogs quickly learn when it is tablet time and will vanish from sight if given the opportunity. First catch the patient!

If possible try to get someone to help you to hold the dog. Depending on his size you may find it more comfortable supporting him on your lap if small or held between your knees if larger. Most people find it easier to approach from the side or behind when giving tablets.

Place one hand across the muzzle and insert a forefinger and the thumb gently into the space behind the canine teeth (fangs) then gently press the thumb or forefinger on to the roof of the dog's mouth. Provided you have sufficient strength and dexterity in your wrist to be able to cope with the dog's head movement, this strategy usually effectively prevents the shutting of the jaws on your fingers providing you maintain pressure on the roof of the mouth.



Pressure on the roof of the mouth is the secret!

**It is most important that the gentle pressure on the hard palate is not reduced otherwise the mouth will clamp shut.**

With the tablet in the other hand it can then be pushed as far down the throat as possible and if the jaws are then quickly closed and the throat stroked the tablet is usually swallowed.

**I understand there are certain pill pushers. Can these be used?**

There are certain devices on the market to help getting tablets into dogs. Some of these are reasonably effective but none are, in our experience, 100%.

**Can I disguise the tablets with anything?**

Yes, many people find that wrapping the tablet in a favourite food or tidbit will often do the trick. It should be remembered that there are certain tablets that you may have been directed to give on an empty stomach and care must be exercised then in the amount of food or tidbits allocated. One or two treats in order to get the medication into the dog is preferable to no medication!

**Can I crush the tablets and mix them in food?**

It may be possible but some tablets are specially coated because the actual drug is unpleasant tasting. In these cases you will achieve nothing. If in doubt, please ask us.



**I get the tablet into the throat and follow all the instructions but frequently find it on the floor sometime later.**

Even the most experienced of us have had this. If you are not sure that the tablet has been swallowed dripping a little water into the mouth with the aid of a syringe usually ensures that it is swallowed. Alternatively try gently pinching the nose and then stroking the throat.

*This client education handout is based on material written by Trevor Turner, BVetMed, MRCVS, FRSH, MCI Arb, MAE.  
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