

Use of trazodone and gabapentin to reduce fear, anxiety and stress during veterinary visits in client owned dogs.

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Fear and anxiety associated with veterinary visits can lead to both adverse psychological and physiological effects, making patients more difficult to examine leading to delayed treatment, limited preventative care options, potential injuries, and overall poor patient welfare. In cats, studies have demonstrated the efficacy of trazodone and gabapentin separately in reducing the clinical signs of fear and anxiety, facilitating veterinary examinations and transportation to the veterinary hospital. However, the author could not find similar studies in dogs using these medications for veterinary visits in combination or as a single agent. We hypothesized that when administered prior to veterinary visits, a combination of trazodone and gabapentin would decrease anxiety related clinical signs associated with the veterinary visit and facilitate handling during a physical examination in dogs compared to placebo. This was a double blinded, placebo controlled, randomized crossover study. Prior to a scheduled veterinary visit and examination, each dog was randomly assigned to receive a trazodone and gabapentin medication combination or placebo PO. After a 1-week period, each dog received the opposite treatment and the protocol was repeated. At each visit, the dog was assigned a stress score, behavior summation score, and tractability score by the client and PI. No significant difference was found in any of the scores, for each category, when compared to placebo although the overall total score in each category was increased on placebo. The most common adverse event reported was sedation. Although the results did not support the hypothesis in this study, both trazodone and gabapentin appeared to be well tolerated by most dogs.

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