

Greetings from Vested Interest in K9s to K9 Handlers and Law Enforcement Agencies,

Paul McNamara, a Board Certified Veterinary Surgeon, Tactical Veterinarian for the Dutchess County Sheriff's Office, NY and the National Medical Director for the USPCA has shared the below information which we are passing along to you. Please be sure to visit with your agency's Veterinarian to discuss Xylazine and your K9 Emergency Protocol. If you do not have a K9 Emergency Protocol, now would be the perfect time to work with your office/department and Veterinarian to draft one.

The drug Xylazine is becoming an increasingly dangerous illicit drug throughout the country and is creating a possible emerging threat to the K9 community. Doctor McNamara has prepared a short overview regarding Xylazine and Fentanyl, including forms the drug is used, how it is used, its effects on K9s, and possible detection of exposure. Vested Interest in K9s, in working with Doctor McNamara, felt it vital to share this article with law enforcement professionals to bring awareness and education as this drug continues to increase in popularity on the streets.

## **Xylazine- a possible emerging threat to the OpK9 Community**

**Paul McNamara, DVM, DACVS**

**Xylazine** is a veterinary drug. It is also being used as a stand-alone street drug or as a cutting agent with other drugs- most commonly fentanyl. Street names include; Tranq, Tranq dope, Sleep-cut, and Zombie drug. It is available in both liquid and powder form. Currently it is NOT a DEA controlled substance and it is relatively inexpensive.

- Signs of xylazine intoxication in people ARE VERY SIMILAR to opiate overdose and include: pin-point pupils, slow respirations, respiratory arrest and hypotension. Signs of xylazine intoxication in dogs include: muscle tremors, seizures, slowed heart rate and decreased respiratory rate and/or depth. Dogs can also swallow excess air which may result in bloat.

- Naloxone, the reversal agent for opiate intoxication, **DOES NOT** reverse the effects of xylazine. -There are NO street side tests available to screen for this drug.

- There are several veterinary medications that are effective in reversing the effects of xylazine including yohimbine (0.11 mg/kg IV) and tolazine (4mg/kg IV slowly). Atipamezole (3750 mcg/M<sup>2</sup> IM or IV) is currently not approved for use for this purpose but is likely to be effective.

### **Recommendation for treatment for POTENTIAL xylazine intoxication:**

1. Protect yourself and others from potential exposure utilizing all appropriate PPE and safety measures.
2. If respiratory depression is confirmed, administer Naloxone in accordance with your training. This should be done even if xylazine intoxication is highly suspected due to the strong potential for concurrent opiate exposure. Remember that 100% of dogs given intranasal naloxone **WILL SNEEZE** so protect against aerosolization of inhaled opiates by covering the dogs face and head.
3. Monitor for respiratory arrest and be prepared to assist with ventilatory support **IF** appropriately trained and safe to do so.
4. Initiate your K9 Emergency protocol. Transport immediately if safe to do so but continue to monitor throughout and be prepared to intervene further if necessary.
5. Note if there are changes to respiratory frequency/depth/etc. Since xylazine and opiates are often co-mingled you may see a PARTIAL improvement in signs but not a complete resolution. If in doubt, administer another dose of naloxone to the other nostril.
6. Upon arrival to the Veterinary facility advise the doctor of the potential for xylazine exposure so that they can be prepared to administer the specific reversal agents. Consider obtaining a blood sample for future forensic testing.