

VETERINARY VOICE: Tips of the Trade

Ophthalmology- Famciclovir use in cats

**What is famciclovir and how does it work?
What is it used to treat?**

Famciclovir is a guanine analog antiviral. It is the prodrug form of penciclovir (the active metabolite). Penciclovir preferentially inhibits the DNA polymerase of susceptible viruses; at clinically relevant levels, there is no substantial effect upon cellular DNA polymerase, thereby minimizing effects on the host.

It is used to treat herpes zoster and herpes simplex type 1 and 2 in humans. Veterinary researchers have been evaluating its safety and efficacy as therapy for feline herpesvirus-1.

What is the appropriate dose of famciclovir (famvir®)?

The dose of famciclovir in cats has been evaluated and an appropriate dose has been determined to be approximately 40 mg/kg/day. This can be given every 24 hours. Famciclovir is very safe in cats as it has been shown that a dose as high as 90 mg/kg three times a day for 3 weeks was safe in cats experimentally infected with feline herpesvirus-1.

Is it safe?

This is a moderately expensive drug (about \$3- \$5 per 250mg pill) and comes in 125 mg, 250 mg, and 500 mg tablet sizes. I usually start with a 10 day course of medication for mild-moderate cases and recheck in 10-14 days. I prolong therapy for more severe cases of herpesviral keratitis and conjunctivitis. Adjunctive therapy for herpesvirus is sometimes necessary depending on affected tissues, severity, and chronicity.

Why choose famciclovir?

Famciclovir is helpful in cats that are resistant to topical therapy and if they have other clinical signs of disease besides ocular disease (respiratory, dermatological).

It is once daily dosing.

It has been shown to decrease clinical disease scores and decrease circulating antibodies to feline herpesvirus in cats.

Questions?

**Ophthalmology
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The Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson has a board-certified ophthalmologist available for questions and consultations on ophthalmic diseases and surgeries during the weekdays. She is also on call to provide consultations to VSCT emergency doctors and to perform emergency procedures for patients seen by the VSCT emergency service. Board-certified ophthalmologists have four additional years of training after veterinary school and are certified by the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists' to assure competency in advanced veterinary ophthalmology.