**Ergocalciferol**

*(er-goh-kal-sif-e-ole)*

**Description:** Vitamin D supplement

**Other Names for this Medication:** Vitamin D2, Drisdol®

**Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary:** None. **Human:** 400 unit & 2,000 unit tablets; 50,000 unit capsules; 8,000 units/mL oral solution.

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This information sheet does not contain all available information for this medication. It is to help answer commonly asked questions and help you give the medication safely and effectively to your animal. If you have other questions or need more information about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.

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**Key Information**

- Used to treat disorders that can cause low calcium or vitamin D levels.
- Ergocalciferol is one type of vitamin D; several other types exist that can have different properties and actions.
- May require high doses to be effective.
- Effects in the body may be slow to begin and can last for a long time after administration.
- Side effects are uncommon.

**How is this medication useful?**

Ergocalciferol is used to treat patients with low calcium and/or vitamin D levels. The FDA (U.S. Food & Drug Administration) has approved ergocalciferol for use in humans, but it is not officially approved for use in animals. The FDA allows veterinarians to prescribe and use human products containing this drug in animals in certain situations. You and your veterinarian can discuss why this drug is the most appropriate choice.

**What should I tell my veterinarian to see if this medication can be safely given?**

Many things might affect how well this drug will work in your animal. Be sure to discuss the following with your veterinarian so together you can make the best treatment decisions.

- Other drugs can interact with ergocalciferol, so be sure to tell your veterinarian and pharmacist what medications (including vitamins, supplements, or herbal therapies) you give your animal, including the amount and time you give each.
- Tell your veterinarian about any conditions or diseases your animal may have now or has had in the past.
- If your animal has been treated for the same disease or condition in the past, tell your veterinarian about the treatment and how well it did or did not work.
If your animal is pregnant or nursing, talk to your veterinarian about the risks of using ergocalciferol.

Tell your veterinarian and pharmacist about any medication side effects (including allergic reactions, lack of appetite, diarrhea, itching, hair loss) your animal has developed in the past.

How long until I will know if this medication is working, and how long will the effects of this medication last?

This medication takes several doses before you will see any effect. The medication's full effects may not be evident until your animal has taken it consistently for several weeks. However, you may not see any improvement of clinical signs outwardly, so your veterinarian may need to run further tests to determine if the drug is working appropriately. The effects of this medication are long-lived, meaning they may last for multiple (ie, 4 to 6) weeks, although they may be prolonged if your animal has decreased kidney and/or liver function.

When should this medication not be used or be used very carefully?

No drug is 100% safe in all patients, but your veterinarian will discuss with you any specific concerns about using this drug in your animal.

This drug SHOULD NOT be used in patients:

- That are allergic to it.
- With high blood levels of calcium, phosphorus, or vitamin D.
- That have kidney failure.

This drug should be used WITH CAUTION in patients:

- That are nursing.
- That are taking other medications that could be impacted by elevated blood levels of calcium.
- In cats, as they usually respond better to other forms of vitamin D.

If your animal has any of these conditions, talk to your veterinarian about the potential risks versus benefits.

What are the side effects of this medication?

Ergocalciferol is usually well tolerated by pets.

**Side effects that may be serious or indicate a serious problem:**

- Loss of appetite (especially cats).
- Low energy level.

If you see any of these signs, contact your veterinarian immediately.

If my animal gets too much of this medication (an overdose), what should I do?

If you witness or suspect an overdose, contact your veterinarian or an animal poison control center for further advice. Animal poison control centers open 24 hours a day include: Pet Poison HELPLINE (855-764-7661) and ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (888-426-4435); a consultation fee may be charged for these services.

How should this medication be given?

For ergocalciferol to work properly, give it exactly as your veterinarian has prescribed. Check the prescription label to be sure you are giving the drug correctly.

- The drug may be given either with food or on an empty stomach. If your animal vomits or acts sick after receiving the drug on an empty stomach, try giving the next dose with food or a small treat. If vomiting continues, contact your veterinarian.
- Liquid forms of ergocalciferol must be measured carefully. Your veterinarian or pharmacist can help by providing special measuring spoons or syringes.
- If you have difficulty getting your animal to take the medicine, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist for tips to help with dosing and reduce the stress of medication time for both you and your animal.
- Patients are usually on ergocalciferol for an extended period, often for the rest of their lives. Give this medication according to the label's instructions and obtain refills as needed. Before stopping this medication, talk to your veterinarian, as there may be important reasons to continue its use.

What should I do if I miss giving a dose of this medication?

If you miss a dose, give it when you remember, but if it is close enough to the time for the next dose, skip the dose you missed and give it at the next scheduled time. After that, return to the regular dosing schedule. Do not double-up or give extra doses.

How should I store this medication?

- Store ergocalciferol in the original prescription bottle or an approved dosage reminder container (ie, pill minder) at room temperature and protected from light.

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If your veterinarian or pharmacist has prepared (compounded) a special formulation for your animal, follow the storage recommendations and expiration date for the product.

Keep away from children and other animals.

**Can handling this medication be hazardous to me, my family, or other animals?**

There are no specific precautions required when handling ergocalciferol unless you are allergic to it. Wash your hands after handling any medication.

**How should I dispose of this medication if I don’t use it all?**

- Do not flush this medication down the toilet or wash it down the sink. If a community drug “take-back” program is available, use this option. If there is no take-back program, mix the drug with coffee grounds or cat litter (to make it undesirable to children and animals and unrecognizable to people who might go through your trash), place the mixture in a sealable plastic bag to keep it from leaking out, and throw the bag out with the regular trash.
- Do not save leftover medication for future use or give it to others to use.

**What other information is important for this medication?**

- Use of ergocalciferol may not be allowed in certain animal competitions. Check rules and regulations before entering your animal in a competition while this medication is being administered.
- While on this medication, your animal will need to be monitored closely by your veterinarian. Do not miss these important follow-up visits.

**If you have any other questions about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.**

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