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WVA Position Statement In Opposition To International Scheduling Of Ketamine

INTRODUCTION

Ketamine is an important drug for anaesthesia and immobilisation in veterinary medicine. However, proposals have been submitted to international organizations to restrict its use by placing it as a scheduled substance of the 1971 UN Convention on psychotropic substances. Since it is often the only available, injectable anaesthetic drug, its use should not be restricted as an internationally scheduled drug.

WVA POSITION

The World Veterinary Association (WVA) strongly objects to international control of ketamine, as this could lead to ketamine being no longer available to veterinary and medical practitioners for clinical use.

DISCUSSION

The WVA supports the decision of the World Health Organization's Expert Committee on Drug Dependence which critically evaluated ketamine in 2006, 2012, 2014, and 2015 and recommended that ketamine not be placed under international control. The WHO Committee concluded that ketamine abuse does not pose a global public health threat, while international scheduling could limit access to an important anaesthetic and immobilizing agent.

The WVA is aware of the potential public health problems caused by illicit use of ketamine; however, the impact of reduced availability would significantly detract from human and animal welfare. The WVA recognizes that some countries may choose to limit use of ketamine to licensed or registered professionals such as veterinarians and physicians.