



American Association of Equine Practitioners

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January 23, 2024

Chairperson Liz Krueger
Senate Finance Committee
172 State Street, Capitol
Building Room 416 CAP
Albany, NY 12247
Via financechair@nysenate.gov

Chairperson Helene E. Weinstein
Assembly Ways and Means Committee
LOB 711-A
Albany, NY 12248
Via wamchair@nyassembly.gov

RE: FY 2025 Executive Budget, Department of Health, Scheduling of Xylazine

Dear Chairperson Krueger and Chairperson Weinstein,

The American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) is a professional association comprised of nearly 9,000 equine veterinarians and students, including more than 300 in New York and in over 60 countries around the world.

The AAEP wishes to state its opposition to the proposed scheduling of xylazine in New York without an exemption for veterinary uses. If this were to occur, it would drastically change the way equine veterinarians are able to care for their patients, creating animal welfare and human safety concerns. As you can imagine, this is a huge concern for veterinarians and livestock producers. While the AAEP recognizes the threat of illicit xylazine as it poses grave health and safety risks to human users, we feel there are ways to address this threat without impacting the welfare of equine and other animal species.

Xylazine is a non-narcotic veterinary sedative, analgesic, and muscle relaxant that has been approved in the United States for veterinary use since 1972. It is used across veterinary medicine and is especially important when working with cattle, horses, zoo, wildlife, and laboratory species to facilitate safe medical evaluation, treatment, and surgical care.

Sedation of fractious and large animals, including equines, with xylazine is critical to keeping people and animals safe. This drug is needed for safe handling and care of horses and when performing procedures such as treating leg or hoof injuries, and handling obstetrical complications, and handling horses in times of emergency such as trailer accidents, or other challenging situations horse owners, veterinarians and first responders may find themselves in with equines. Xylazine can also be used to immobilize injured animals at processing plants before euthanizing and disposal in compliance with USDA humane handling requirements. There is no practical alternative for sedation in cattle and limited and less effective alternatives for horses. Limiting veterinary access to this critical drug will jeopardize animal welfare and human safety.

There are currently only two manufacturers of xylazine for veterinary use in the United States. Xylazine is a low-volume generic drug that generates little revenue for manufacturers, and we do not believe there is a significant diversion from the legitimate veterinary distribution channel. Increased regulations on legitimate xylazine to address illicit xylazine will result in supply chain disruptions or eliminate the product from the market. If xylazine is scheduled as a controlled substance without an exemption for veterinary use, there is a very real risk that it will cease to be available in New York because of the increased regulatory burden and costs for the manufacturers and distributors. It is our understanding that one of the manufacturers has already ceased making the product until there is more regulatory clarity and uniformity between states. This leaves one manufacturer currently providing product to the entire U.S. market.

The veterinary and farming community is not taking the drug epidemic and the role xylazine plays lightly. Discussions with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and lawmakers led to the introduction of the bipartisan, bicameral Combating Illicit Xylazine Act. This legislation would engage and equip the DEA with tools to combat illicit xylazine while maintaining veterinarians' access and ability to legitimately use this critical animal sedative. The legislation is supported by a long list of stakeholders, including us and the New York State Veterinary Medical Society (NYSVMS).

On December 12, 2023, key elements of the Combating Illicit Xylazine Act were incorporated into the Support for Patients and Communities Reauthorization Act (H.R. 4531 or SUPPORT Act) passed the House with overwhelming bipartisan support on a vote of 386-37. This bill would schedule xylazine as a Schedule III drug and exempt the FDA-approved animal drug from scheduling. This would provide DEA enforcement tools necessary to address illicit xylazine while preserving legitimate veterinary access. There is precedent for this, as Congress has taken this approach before with another animal drug.

The AAEP respectfully requests that any provision related to scheduling of xylazine exempt use in legitimate veterinary practice.

The AAEP continues to work with Congress, the Administration and Federal agencies on solutions to address this pressing public health issue while maintaining veterinarians' access and use of this critical veterinary drug. The AAEP is working closely with other equine and veterinary organizations such as the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), American Horse Council (AHC) and American Association of Bovine Professionals (AABP). A federal solution is anticipated soon, until then we appreciate your consideration of this necessary amendment for all New York veterinarians and the animals under their care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katherine Garrett".

Katherine Garrett, DVM, Dipl. ACVS
2024 AAEP President