Side effects of Clonidine and Trazodone

Your veterinarian has recommended that an adjunctive medication—either clonidine or trazodone—be given in addition to the medication you are already giving to help control your dog’s anxiety. The likelihood of severe effects from either of these drugs is very low, but here a few things to be on lookout for if your dog is receiving one of these drugs. Note that neither of these drugs should be given to pets already receiving a monoamine oxidase inhibitor such as selegiline or amitraz.

How they help
Clonidine or trazodone can help in short-term, predictable instances of anxiety in your dog, such as fear of thunderstorms or other noises—even separation anxiety. Both drugs can also be given long-term to add to the effectiveness of the antianxiety drug your dog is already receiving for general anxiety. It takes one to two hours for either drug to reach its full effects. Your veterinarian will work with you to find the most effective dose and frequency of administration.

Clonidine—what to look for
Clonidine can cause dry mouth (seen as increased water intake), incoordination, constipation, and sedation. If you note any of these signs, be sure to contact your veterinarian. He or she may lower the dosage to help minimize the effects.

Trazodone—what to look for
Side effects of trazodone include vomiting, diarrhea, sedation, incoordination, hypotension (low blood pressure; seen as weakness, falling over, or fainting), excitement or agitation, and panting. If your dog is receiving a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (e.g. fluoxetine) or a tricyclic antidepressant (e.g. clomipramine), also be on the lookout for seizures. As with clonidine, if you note any of these signs, be sure to contact your veterinarian so he or she can help minimize or eliminate these effects.

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