

According to German drug law, medicinal leeches are non-prescription proprietary medicinal products. These products are available for private individuals only in pharmacies. With the exception of internet pharmacies, all sales of leeches through the internet accessible to private individuals are either not selling leeches as a medicinal product, or the offer is bogus, fake, or fraudulent.

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Manufacturing authorisation for ingredients of animal origin (leeches), human and veterinary medicinal products is in accordance to Art. 40 and Art. 111 (1) of Directive 2001/83/EC transposed in the following national legislation: Section 13 paragraph 1 German Drug law (Arzneimittelgesetz - AMG)

Leeches for medical applications are a finished medicinal product as defined in section 2 paragraph 1 no. 1 and section 4 paragraph 1 of the German Drug Law. The production processes adhere to the following quality directives:

- GMP: Good Manufacturing Practice in accordance with the European Quality Directive for Pharmaceutical Producers
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Information on the DGTHA:

The purpose of the German Association for the Promotion of Leech Therapy and the Protection of Leeches (DGTHA) is to bring together all parties interested in leeches and their therapeutic use, pooling forces and striving to maintain a balance between medicinal use of leeches and their continued existence in their natural environment.

Further information on the DGTHA is available in German at www.dgtha.de.



DGTHA

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ihres Artenschutzes e.V.

DGTHA Information on Hirudo/Leech Therapy in Household Pets (Dogs, Cats and Rodents)



Information Brochure
January 2013

LEECH THERAPY IN VETERINARY MEDICINE

Leech Therapy

Leech therapy is a traditional and recognised treatment of various human diseases. As people have become more and more concerned about the well-being of their pets, leech therapy has become increasingly popular in treating their afflictions.

With this brochure, the German Association for the Promotion of Leech Therapy and the Protection of Leeches, the DGTHA, wishes to give an overview of the various possibilities of applying leech therapy in treatment of household pets such as dogs, cats, and rodents.

Medicinal leeches have a large number of curative active substances in their saliva. These substances are released into the blood and tissue in the course of the sucking process.

The leech can be seen as a living natural pharmacy, full of active ingredients also used in conventional medicine. However, this

natural combination of active leech ingredients is unique. Over the last few decades, modern analytical methods have been able to elucidate the biochemical mechanisms and efficacy of many leech saliva substances. For this reason, German authorities have classified leeches as a proprietary medicinal product subject to the same regulations on safety, quality, and efficacy as all regulated medicinal products.

The active substances in leech saliva inhibit blood coagulation and

enhance blood circulation in the placement area and are particularly active in combatting painful inflammation. The metabolism enhanced by leech therapy can even have a beneficial effect on chronic diseases, raising new perspectives for alleviation and cure.



Leech therapy can effectively be used in the following diseases of household pets such as dogs, cats, and rodents

- Arthritis
- Joint malformations (e.g. hip dysplasia, elbow dysplasia)
- Ligament and tendon diseases
- Intervertebral disc diseases (e.g. spondylopathy, discopathy)
- Neuritic diseases (irritation or inflammation of nerves, e.g. ischialgia)
- Lumbago
- Myogelosis (muscle stiffness)
- Eczema (including lick eczema, ear or interdigital eczema)
- Abscesses
- Mastitis (inflammation of teats)
- Wound healing deficits
- Scar healing complications (including post-operative scars)
- Haematoma (bruising)
- Venous diseases (thrombosis, thrombophlebitis)
- Lymphangitis (inflammation of lymph duct and nodes)
- Dental and jaw diseases

What happens in the course of leech therapy?

The treatment of your household pet usually takes about 60 to 90 minutes. Depending on indication, a single session is often sufficient. At the start of treatment, the leech is placed on the specified skin area, attaches itself and gnaws carefully into the skin with its minuscule teeth. This procedure is nearly painless, as the leech is assumed to release analgesic substances while sawing. Later on (15 to 90 minutes), the leech injects active ingredients into the tissue during the sucking process. When finished, the leech will fall off of its own accord. The small bite injury is kept open by an ingredient called calin (saratin) for 4 to 12 hours during which some blood will continue to ooze. The healing effects occur after varying time spans, often immediately following treatment. The effects frequently last for months.

How will your household pet react to the leech bite?

As a rule, household pets will accept the leech bite without any signs of resistance and will usually tolerate the treatment patiently. The healing efficacy of the leech bite has obviously become rooted in their instincts in the course of evolution. Many animals will snooze calmly during treatment.



What is necessary for the aftercare?

If wound impurities can be avoided, the wound can be kept open to allow blood to continue to ooze. If necessary, an absorbent bandage may be applied to the wound. This may be especially important if there is a risk of stains getting on furniture or clothing.

What are the risks for your household pet?

Adverse drug reactions are very rarely observed in leech therapy performed on animals. In principle, the risk of wound infections or allergic reactions has to be considered.



In addition, the animal might be sick with diseases precluding the use of leech therapy.

For these reasons, the DGTHA recommends leech therapy be performed only by a trained professional or under the strict supervision thereof.