

TRANQUILIZATION OF FIVE HALF-BRED HORSES WITH REVERSIBLE NEUROLEPTANALGESIC IMMOBILON™ FOR TRANSPORTATION

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Horses that are difficult to handle or to load to a vehicle can cause a frustration to their owners. As such horses can injure themselves and their handlers, veterinarians are often requested to assist in such difficult situations. This communication describes experience in using Immobilon™ to tranquilize 5 such feral horses that were free grazing in approximately 500 acres in order to load them to vehicles for translocation.

Apparently healthy free grazing, half-bred horses (3 males and 2 females) were tranquilized on 3 different days for capture and translocation. Immobilon™ [each ml contains 2.45 mg etophine hydrochloride, 10 mg acepromazine maleate BP (vet)] at the rate of 0.5 ml/50 kg was administered intramuscularly using the pole syringe. Visually estimated body weight of the horses ranged from about 100-250 kg and the dose of Immobilon™ was diluted 1:1 with normal saline before injected.

All horses were monitored during the entire operation, until loaded. Time taken for appearance of different signs of sedation such as ptosis, lowering of head, staggering gait and relaxation of the penis were 2-4 min, 2-4 min, 1-4 min, and 4-7 min respectively. Within 2-5 min post administration, the horses became slightly excited and 3 of them ran upon disturbance about 100-200 m. They fell on lateral recumbency within 4-14 min. Muscular tremors were observed in all five horses, but diminished after they were left recumbent and undisturbed. The respiratory rate and heart rate of the horses after recumbency were 5-10 min and 28-34 min, respectively.

Once recumbent, their legs were tied with ropes and eyes were covered with a thick cloth. An equal volume of large animal Revivon™ (each ml contains 3.26mg diprenorphine hydrochloride) was injected intravenously into the jugular vein, immediately after completion of the major restraint procedures. The respiratory rate and heart rate were monitored during recovery and were 7-13 min and 36-40 min respectively. After injecting Revivon™ legs were loosened. All animals were given Benacillin (150 mg/ml procaine penicillin, 150 mg/ml benzathine penicillin, 20 mg/ml procaine hydrochloride) injection and 04 doses of tetanus toxoid. The five horses stood up within 3-8 minutes after the intravenous injection. These animals were loaded into vehicles with adequate beddings (straw) and transported 70-100 km. During transportation they were blindfolded.

The use of the pole syringe may have reduced the tissue injury compared to a dart gun. However, the sedated horses are likely to injure themselves due to initial excitement, in this procedure. Immobilon™ is recommended to be used intravenously in horses, though it was used intramuscularly in the present study. It is also recommended, not to dilute the drug, though we diluted due to practical reasons. The experience revealed that Immobilon™ and Revivon™ may be used with care, to restraint and transport half-bred feral horses.