



Congratulations on your new companion! The transition from a shelter to a home is a big change for many animals. Even confident pets can feel overwhelmed at first. To help your pet settle in comfortably, we may send them home with short-term, anti-anxiety medications. Even though your pet is now going to a home (which is wonderful), the transition itself can still feel overwhelming at first. Sending medication home can help to bridge that transition period and support a calmer adjustment.

Why was my pet prescribed medication?

These medications were originally prescribed while your pet was in the shelter to help them cope with:

- Stress from the shelter environment
- Fear, anxiety, or overstimulation/frustration (sometimes called FAS: Fear, Anxiety, Stress)
- Difficulty settling or resting

Dog Medications

Your dog may be sent home with one or a combination of:

- Gabapentin – reduces sensitivity and promotes calmness
- Trazodone – helps with relaxation and settling
- Clonidine – decreases fear-based responses
- Alprazolam – short-acting anti-anxiety support

These are medications commonly used together short-term, for stress support.

Cat Medications

Your cat may be sent home with:

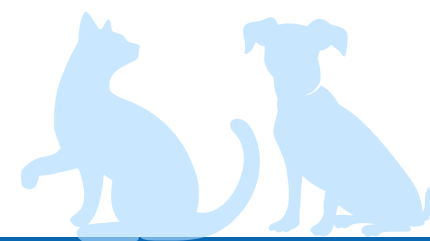
- Gabapentin – widely used for stress and handling anxiety
- Pregabalin – similar effect, supports relaxation

These are medications commonly used short-term, for stress support.

How long do I give the medication?

- Typically your pet will be sent home with a prescription lasting 7–10 days after adoption
- Designed for short-term use only (initial decompression period)
- No weaning is required unless specifically instructed

In most cases, the plan is to discontinue the medication once your pet is settling into the home environment



What should I expect?

It's normal for your pet to:

- Be quiet or sleepy - mental stimulation overload!
- Take a few days to adjust to new surroundings
- Gradually become more comfortable and confident

Medication may cause:

- Mild drowsiness
- A calmer demeanor
- Ataxia - unsteady gait/stumbling

What is the goal?

Short term support of animals displaying signs of FAS while in shelter.

Our goal is that once your pet is:

- ✓ Out of the shelter environment
- ✓ Settled into a predictable home routine

They will no longer need medication

What if I think my pet still needs support?

If your pet continues to show signs of anxiety or difficulty coping after the initial period and you would like to continue the medication, please contact your regular veterinarian. They can:

- Reassess your pet's needs
- Discuss whether ongoing support is appropriate
- Adjust your pet's plan to a longer term management solution

When should I reach out for support sooner?

Contact a veterinarian if you notice:

- Extreme sedation (very hard to wake, unable to stand)
- Persistent vomiting, diarrhea or anorexia (not eating)

Remember HSLM is also here to support you with any NON-URGENT questions or concerns regarding the use of these medications!

Helping your pet adjust

You can support your pet by:

- Providing a quiet, safe space
- Keeping routines consistent and predictable
- Allowing them to adjust at their own pace
- Using gentle, positive reinforcement

Questions?

We're here to support you and your new pet. Please reach out if you need guidance during this transition. Email adoptions@hslm.ca

