

Flea and Heartworm Preventative Drug Triflexis Accused of Causing Sickness and Deaths in Some Dogs.

ATLANTA's Channel 2 Action News has discovered the number of dog deaths pet owner's blame on the popular pet medication Triflexis outnumbers the cases involving the Chinese jerky treats.

Elanco, the company that makes Triflexis, refused repeated requests from Channel 2 consumer investigator Jim Strickland to turn over its data.

Strickland filed a Freedom of Information request with the Food and Drug Administration and got the agency's data instead. It showed that since Triflexis hit the market, every 36 hours, a pet owner reported that Triflexis killed their dog.

Triflexis is the most popular flea and heartworm pill of its kind with more than 50 million doses dispensed. Most of the dogs on Triflexis are fine.

Strickland spoke to one of Elanco's top veterinarians at the company headquarters near Indianapolis less than a month ago. It was the first time the company agreed to speak on camera about the issue.

Read the original WSB-TV investigation on Triflexis_

[\(http://www.wsbtv.com/news/news/local/dog-owners-question-link-between-meds-and-deaths/nbpSg/\)](http://www.wsbtv.com/news/news/local/dog-owners-question-link-between-meds-and-deaths/nbpSg/)

At the time, Dr. Stephen Connell said that Elanco just wanted to make sure the full extent of the story is known. Still, he would not divulge how many complaints of deaths and illness have come into Elanco's response center.

Elanco is required to report those complaints to the FDA. According to FDA records, pet owners have reported 700 dog deaths. That's 120 more than the deaths linked to Chinese chicken jerky treats. Like the treats, Triflexis is suspected, but not the proven cause.

Connell did tell Strickland, "Everything we have on file is within expectations. We remain convinced that the value and benefit of this product still far exceeds the rare risk of these things happening, as unfortunate as they are."

Barrow County resident Chris Smith believes wholeheartedly that Triflexis killed his dog, Kinzie.

"I tell everyone I know who has a dog, don't give them Triflexis," Smith said.

Kinzie was an agility-trained athlete. She died three hours after getting her first dose of Triflexis. A necropsy showed hemorrhaging from several organs. Read her necropsy report here_

[\(http://www.wsbtv.com/documents/2013/nov/26/kinzies-necropsy/\)](http://www.wsbtv.com/documents/2013/nov/26/kinzies-necropsy/) .

Kinzie died in 2011, six weeks after Triflexis hit the market. Smith said he called _Elanco and a representative told him Kinzie was the first dog death reported._

[\(http://www.wsbtv.com/documents/2013/nov/26/letter-elanco-kinzies-owner/\)](http://www.wsbtv.com/documents/2013/nov/26/letter-elanco-kinzies-owner/)

The FDA numbers also showed 259 of the 700 dogs that died were euthanized.

That was the case with Hall County resident Beth Timms' dog, Gizmo, earlier this year.

"Her fever had gotten to 106. They had to give her an ice bath. (The vet) said, 'We need to make a decision, nothing we're doing is working,'" Timms said. "We had to let her go. We had to have her put to sleep."

The FDA website still only posts 31 deaths, the number Strickland originally reported. Strickland learned that number only included complaints mailed to the FDA, and not any emailed complaints.

_Complaints filed on paper include 48 deaths.

(http://media.cmgdigital.com/shared/news/documents/2013/11/26/Trifexis_paper_reports.pdf)

A FDA spokesperson told Strickland the agency hasn't updated the numbers, because it is updating systems.

The new numbers also show a huge jump in the cases of dogs reported sick after taking Trifexis

(<http://www.wsbtv.com/documents/2013/nov/26/trifexis-electronic-reports-illness/>) .

Forsyth County resident Amy Thornton's dog Ivan is one of them. She gave the pug two doses of Trifexis and didn't have any problems.

Thornton said it was after the third dose that Ivan lost control of his back legs. She took video of it to share with her vet.

"Exactly six hours after I gave it to him, he started acting really weird, lethargic," Thornton said. "I was scared to death. I thought he was dying that night."

The FDA numbers posted online for lethargy is just above 600. The updated number Strickland got from the agency showed it's actually nearly 8,000.

The numbers on the web for vomiting is at 2,200. Updated figures revealed it's closer to 30,000.

"We have not been able to identify with all of these reports any specific trends we can link directly to the use of this product," Connell told Strickland last month. "That said, it is an ongoing evaluation that we do and we feel it is our responsibility."

After Strickland's initial report three weeks ago, the Georgia Veterinary Association released a statement saying news reports like this show how important it is for pet owners to talk to their vets and discuss their options.

Every vet Strickland spoke to stress the importance of heartworm prevention, and urged pet owners not to boycott the drugs altogether.