

Advantages and guidelines for using alpha-2 agonists as anesthetic adjuvants.

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Authors: Department of Veterinary Clinical Medicine, University of Illinois, College of Veterinary Medicine, Urbana.

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Xylazine and medetomidine produce reliable sedation, muscle relaxation, and analgesia in dogs and cats. In addition, alpha-2 agonists have proved very effective as sedative-analgesic adjuncts when coadministered with benzodiazepine or opioid agonists. Alpha-2 agonists should not be classified as monoanesthetics. They are excellent anesthetic adjuncts when combined with dissociatives and opioids. Because of the acute alterations in cardiopulmonary function commonly induced by alpha-2 agonists, it is suggested that their use be restricted to the young healthy patient undergoing routine surgical or diagnostic procedure. The development of more specific and selective alpha-2 agonists will continue to enhance the safety and reliability of this novel class of compounds. The unique spectrum of anesthetic properties induced by alpha-2 agonists has assured them of an increasingly prominent role in the development of new and sophisticated ways of achieving anesthesia.