

Fears of drug use spreading in Lincoln rise after break-ins

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Used legally in the United States as a veterinary anesthetic, Ketamine's complex chemical makeup prohibits the amateur production common to drugs like methamphetamine or LSD.

Dr. Ally Jorgensen, assistant executive director of the Nebraska Pharmacists Association, said production of Ketamine — particularly the nitrogen element at the core of the drug

— requires taking several complex steps that each require a strong knowledge of chemical manufacturing.

"I believe that there are not a lot of people who could make it in a clandestine laboratory," Jorgensen said.

The nitrogen element allows the chemical to penetrate brain and muscle tissue quickly.

Because of this complex makeup, Jorgensen said, much of the Ketamine available to recreational users in the

United States comes from overseas.

"It is coming into this country because in countries other than ours, veterinary medicine is all but unregulated," Jorgensen said.

Bullock said Ketamine is available in Mexico and other Latin American countries.

The complicated nature of Ketamine's production could explain Monday's rash of veterinary clinic break-ins, Bullock said.

Bullock described Ketamine as a "club drug" because its use is common in dance clubs. He said Lincoln police have never made a seizure of the drug.

Megan McCaffery, a veterinarian's assistant at Parkview Animal Hospital, said Ketamine is being replaced by Xylazene in clinics because while both work in similar ways, Xylazene does not cause hallucinations and is not a controlled substance.

McCaffery said both Ketamine and

Xylazene are used to calm cats and dogs before surgery.

Parkview Animal Hospital lost 10 milliliters of Ketamine and about 450 milliliters of Xylazene in Monday's break-in. McCaffery said the Ketamine stolen was the clinic's last bottle.

If taken in large quantities, Xylazene can cause heart attacks, Finnell said. Police fear users experimenting with the drug could overdose and die.

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