

EPILEPSY

PET CARE SHEET

Epilepsy is a disorder of repeated seizures ('fits'). Sometimes the seizure begins as a result of another disorder eg liver disease, brain damage - epilepsy is then secondary (to the other disease), but usually there is no apparent reason for the seizures (primary epilepsy) and the animal is otherwise completely healthy. Epilepsy is usually first seen in young animals, typically between 6 months to 5 years of age but can affect animals of any age. German Shepherds, Irish Setters and Labradors are among breeds more prone to primary epilepsy Prior to seizure the dog may be restless and anxious. Each seizure usually lasts 1 to 2 minutes but may be longer. In a typical seizure, the dog will lie on its side and alternate between rigidly straightening out its head and neck and performing jerking, paddling movements with its legs. There may be partial or complete loss of consciousness as well as a loss of control of motions and urine. After a fit the dog may be sleepy, disorientated or restless and some dogs become very affectionate or abnormally hungry or thirsty.

During a fit move any nearby objects which the dog could bump into or become tangled in (cables), turn off TV, dim lights and reduce noise in the room Do not try to hold your dog – he or she may bite without realizing it

DIAGNOSIS Your vet may need to run tests to ensure that there is no other cause of the seizures. These include blood tests, possibly X-rays, and your vet may even recommend a scan (MRI) of your dog's brain. If no other cause can be found then a diagnosis of epilepsy may be made.

TREATMENT Epilepsy can't be cured, but can be controlled with anti-convulsant drugs. This management requires daily medication, periodic check-ups and monitoring of your pets behaviour. Blood samples will be taken to check the effectiveness of the medication. Sometimes a combination of medications is necessary for good seizure control. You should keep a record of the frequency and description of all observed and suspected seizures. Each dog responds differently to anticonvulsant therapy. Although complete elimination of seizures is desirable, it is not always possible. Treatment is considered to be successful where seizures are reduced in frequency, duration and/or severity. Because brain damage can occur during seizures treatment is necessary for medical reasons in dogs which have repeated (more than once a month) prolonged (last longer than 5-10 minutes) or severe seizures or clusters of fits.

As the owner of an epileptic dog, you may have experienced the distressing sight of your dog having a seizure. While the outlook may at first seem bleak, it is important to remember that in typical epileptic seizures the dog is unconscious and not aware that he/she is having a seizure. Also, in most instances effective treatment is possible, and many epileptic dogs enjoy a pain-free, long and happy life. Keep a record of your dog's fits (date, duration, time, behaviour before during and after fit) - you can download a record chart at www.epilepsyindogs.co.uk

The Shrubbery Veterinary Centre, 65 Perry Street, Northfleet, Kent, DA11 8RD.
Tel: 01474 534891\333141 & 5 The Link New Ash Green Tel: 01474 873370