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SEIZURES

Your pet has been diagnosed as having had a seizure. A seizure results from abnormal electrical impulses in the brain and can be caused by many different underlying causes.

a) Causes from **within the brain**, ranging from epilepsy to central brain conditions including infections, growths (both benign and malignant), and a host of other possibilities

b) Causes from **outside the brain** such as exposure to toxins or hormonal problems, where enzymes/toxins spill over into the brain and cause subsequent damage.

It is possible that after having a single seizure, your pet may never have another! In this case, your vet may decide not to start symptomatic treatment at this stage, as there is always a small risk of side effects from any long term medication. However, it is important to keep us updated as if your pet has further seizures then treatment and/or further investigation is certainly warranted.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR PET HAS ANOTHER SEIZURE:

If your pet has another seizure there are a few important things you should think about:

a) Make the room as dark and quiet as possible so there are no additional stimuli that could exacerbate the seizure.

b) Make sure there are no sharp objects nearby on which your pet could hurt him/herself.

c) Do not put yourself in harm's way – remember that if your pet is seizing, he/she is completely unaware of his/her actions and will not be consciously aware of biting or scratching you if stimulated.

d) Try to time how long the seizure lasts – if the seizure persists for over 5 minutes, it is important to seek veterinary advice. Depending on your pet's history, your vet may have prescribed a dose of emergency medication to give in such a situation – these drugs are often given as a rectal suppository for ease of administration in such a patient.

It is important to keep a record of your pet's seizure history – this will be used by your vet to determine whether further investigations are indicated, when medication should be initiated, and if any dosage alterations are advisable.

FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS

It is often advisable to try to work out why your pet has had a seizure, particularly if this is a recurrent event. Initially your vet may recommend a blood sample, to look for some of the causes that may produce toxins that secondarily affect the brain. In order to look for central causes, or those stemming from within the brain tissue, it may be advisable to refer your pet to a specialist where a brain scan can be performed. Your vet will discuss all these options with you so you can make an informed decision as to how detailed an investigation you would like for your pet.

MONITORING YOUR PET WHEN ON ANTI-EPILEPTIC MEDICATION

Sometimes anti-epileptic medication is required to either symptomatically control seizures, or as a specific treatment after in-depth investigation. Depending on the underlying cause & frequency of seizures there are different drugs that may be used.

The most commonly prescribed drug is called **Phenobarbitone**: this is usually given life-long once started. Different patients require very different dosages to achieve clinical control & similarly avoid side effects. Initially your pet may show increased thirst, hunger, & a degree of drowsiness – these signs usually subside within the first 2-4 weeks of therapy. Rarely, there can be skin or blood problems such as anaemia that may result.

It is also important that if the person administering the drug is pregnant, that she wears gloves when handling phenobarbitone.

It is usual to check blood levels of phenobarbitone after 2 weeks of therapy to see whether adequate drug is in the blood stream, & likewise to check whether your pet is being overdosed. Whenever your pet has a blood sample to check for levels of blood phenobarbitone, it is important that the sample is taken at a specified time after your pet is given the tablet – this is to enable the laboratory to interpret your pet's results accurately and give the best advice as to any dosage changes that may be required. For phenobarbitone, this blood sample must be taken 12 hours post pill – as phenobarbitone is usually administered twice daily, this normally results in a blood sample being taken early in the morning or late in the evening, just before the next dosage is due.

Once your pet is on an adequate & safe dosage of phenobarbitone, checks won't need to be as frequent, & usually will be every 3 – 6 months. At these checks, in addition to blood sampling for drug levels, it's important to also check whether your pet's liver is coping with metabolising the drug. Your vet may also require a urine sample once yearly.

If your pet continues to have seizures despite medication, or appears unwell then rechecks may be required more frequently.

There are other drugs that may be added into your pet's medication regime and these will be discussed with you by your vet – they in turn may require blood sampling monitoring which will usually be checked on the same blood sample used to check the phenobarbitone levels.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

- 1. Do not put yourself at risk if your pet has a seizure – time the seizure, inform your vet, and keep a diary. Seizures lasting more than 5 minutes or those forming clusters (multiple seizures over sequential days) are most worrying.**
- 2. Make sure you attend regular checks as advised by your vet & check when you make the appointment as to whether this needs to be at a set time if your pet is on medication.**
- 3. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you are worried about your pet or his/her condition in any way.**