



MANAGEMENT OF EPILEPSY IN DOGS

IF YOUR DOG HAS BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH EPILEPSY, THIS MEANS THAT YOUR DOG IS SUSCEPTIBLE TO EPILEPTIC FITS. THE FREQUENCY AND SEVERITY OF THESE FITS IS VERY UNPREDICTABLE AND THE DECISION TO START TREATMENT SHOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH YOUR VET. IF LEFT UNTREATED, THE FITS MAY GET WORSE AND COULD BE FATAL.

THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT CAUSES OF EPILEPSY IN DOGS; IT CAN BE DUE TO PRIMARY BRAIN PROBLEMS, TUMOURS, DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS, INFECTIONS, TOXINS, ORGAN FAILURE ETC. MOST CASES ARE GIVEN A PRESUMPTIVE DIAGNOSIS OF IDIOPATHIC EPILEPSY AFTER TAKING A HISTORY, CLINICAL EXAM AND BLOOD TESTS (TO RULE OUT THE MORE COMMON CAUSES), BUT FURTHER TESTING IS AVAILABLE (SUCH AS MRI) DEPENDING ON THE INDIVIDUAL CASE.

THE CURRENT TREATMENT FOR EPILEPSY IS A PHENOBARBITONE ORAL TABLET TWICE DAILY FOR THE REST OF YOUR DOG'S LIFE. DIAZEPAM RECTAL TUBES ARE ALSO USED FOR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS WHEN YOUR DOG IS FITTING AND NOT COMING OUT OF IT AS THEY NORMALLY WOULD - THIS IS ADMINISTERED INTO THE RECTUM TO TRY TO STOP YOUR DOG FITTING.

EXPECTATIONS

MOST DOGS WILL RESPOND TO PHENOBARBITONE TREATMENT WELL ONCE LEVELS OF THE DRUG ARE AT THE THERAPEUTIC LEVEL; THIS WILL LEAD TO A REDUCTION IN FITTING FREQUENCY AND SEVERITY. HOWEVER, UP TO 40% OF DOGS MAY CONTINUE TO HAVE SEIZURES AND MAY REQUIRE FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS, INCREASING DOSE RATES OF PHENOBARBITONE OR THE ADDITION OF OTHER ANTI-EPILEPTIC DRUGS.

SOME DOGS MAY ALSO DEVELOP SIDE EFFECTS FROM PHENOBARBITONE TREATMENT. INITIALLY, SOME DOGS WILL SHOW INCREASED DRINKING, URINATING AND APPETITE, SOME WILL BECOME MORE EXCITABLE AND SOME WILL BECOME MORE LETHARGIC. THESE SIDE EFFECTS TEND TO REDUCE OVER TIME AS THE DOG GETS USED TO THE DRUGS. MORE SERIOUS SIDE EFFECTS RELATE TO THE LIVER AND IT IS IMPORTANT THAT REGULAR CHECKUPS AND BLOOD TESTING ARE CARRIED OUT TO MAKE SURE YOUR DOG IS NOT BEING ADVERSELY EFFECTED BY THE TREATMENT.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT NOT TO STOP PHENOBARBITONE TREATMENT ONCE IT HAS BEEN STARTED, THIS CAN LEAD TO SEVERE 'WITHDRAWAL' FITS. PHENOBARBITONE DOSE RATES SHOULD ONLY BE REDUCED AFTER DISCUSSION WITH YOUR VET.

CHECKUPS

TREATMENT FOR EPILEPSY IN DOGS IS VERY SPECIFIC FOR EACH DOG SO REGULAR CHECKUPS ARE NECESSARY TO MONITOR IMPROVEMENT TO TREATMENT AS WELL AS CHECKING LEVELS OF PHENOBARBITONE IN THE BLOOD TO MAKE SURE THEY ARE WITHIN THE CORRECT RANGES.

WE RECOMMEND THAT ALL EPILEPTIC DOGS ARE SEEN TWO WEEKS AFTER STARTING THE TABLETS FOR A HEALTH CHECK AND REPEAT BLOOD SAMPLE TO CHECK HOW WELL YOUR DOG IS RESPONDING TO THE MEDICATION. IF THE PHENOBARBITONE LEVEL IS TOO HIGH OR TOO LOW A DOSAGE CHANGE WOULD BE REQUIRED AND A FURTHER CHECK AND BLOOD SAMPLE TWO WEEKS LATER IS REQUIRED UNTIL YOUR DOG'S PHENOBARBITONE LEVEL BECOMES WITHIN THE THERAPEUTIC RANGE.

ONCE YOUR DOG IS STABLE A FURTHER CHECK UP AT THREE MONTHS INCLUDING A BLOOD SAMPLE TO CHECK THE LIVER PARAMETERS IS RECOMMENDED FOR US TO ASSESS HOW THINGS ARE PROGRESSING AND THEN SIX MONTHLY CHECKS FOR BLOOD TESTING AND IF WE ARE PRESCRIBING MEDICATIONS FOR YOUR DOG.

SEIZURE DIARY

WE RECOMMEND THAT ALL CLIENTS WITH EPILEPTIC DOGS FILL OUT A SEIZURE DIARY THAT DETAILS THE DATE, LENGTH AND SEVERITY OF FITS AND ANY OTHER FACTORS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT AT THE TIME OF THE FIT. THIS MAY GIVE US USEFUL INFORMATION AS TO HOW WELL THE TREATMENT IS WORKING OR IF OTHER FACTORS MAY BE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR DOG'S FITTING.

TESTING

BLOOD TESTS - WILL LOOK AT AND TRACK CHANGES IN PHENOBARBITONE LEVELS AND LIVER PARAMETERS. BLOOD TESTING IS REQUIRED EVERY TWO WEEKS UNTIL THE PHENOBARBITAL LEVEL IS WITHIN THE THERAPEUTIC RANGE, THEN EVERY 3-6 MONTHS DEPENDING ON YOUR DOG'S ONGOING HEALTH AND CONDITION.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO HAVE YOUR DOG'S BLOOD TESTED AT THE RIGHT TIME. TO MONITOR THE RESPONSE TO MEDICATION YOUR DOG'S BLOOD SHOULD BE TAKEN AT THE TIME THE PHENOBARBITONE LEVELS ARE AT THEIR LOWEST, THIS IS AROUND 2 HOURS BEFORE THE NEXT PILL.

WE RECOMMEND A SPECIAL TEST FOR LIVER FUNCTION IS CARRIED OUT EVERY 6-12 MONTHS, THIS REQUIRES A SHORT STAY IN THE HOSPITAL. YOUR DOG WILL HAVE A STARVED BLOOD SAMPLE TAKEN, THEN BE FED A FATTY MEAL AND ANOTHER BLOOD SAMPLE WILL BE TAKEN TWO HOURS LATER.

WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

IF YOUR DOG HAS A FIT AND DOESN'T COME OUT OF IT AS NORMAL, THEN THE DIAZEPAM RECTAL TUBE SHOULD BE APPLIED TO YOUR DOG'S RECTUM AND THE VET SHOULD BE PHONED. IF THE FIT HAPPENS OUT OF HOURS OUR NORMAL RECEPTION NUMBER (01572 722646) HAS A RECORDED MESSAGE WITH DETAILS AND CONTACT NUMBER FOR THE DUTY VET.

