



THE LABRADOR RESCUE TRUST

ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO EPILEPSY IN DOGS

This Veterinary Help Sheet has been very kindly written by Robert White-Adams MRCVS, who regularly writes informative columns in The Trust's 'Labradors Forever' magazine

Epilepsy is a relatively common condition and Labradors are one of the many breeds in which it seems more prevalent. The classical epileptic seizure varies hugely in its duration, severity and pattern of recurrence – and it is only one presentation of this condition. It is also a disease that can only be diagnosed by exclusion of others, i.e. there is no specific test for epilepsy – as clinicians we have to rule out all the other likely conditions until epilepsy is the only thing left on our list!

Then comes the treatment decisions – some patients do not require treatment at all – at the other end of the spectrum are the patients that need urgent life-saving veterinary intervention and then require lifelong treatment.... and of course there are all sorts of variations in-between!

When long-term treatment is needed there are a variety of options – used on their own or in combination – and most requiring some form of long term monitoring.

So whilst the condition is common it is not always dealt with easily or simply. However, most vets are very experienced with epileptic dogs and will capably guide you through dealing with the condition.

The long term prognosis for the majority of dogs with epilepsy is good.

It is not feasible to discuss here all the details of this condition - and it would also be superfluous since there is an excellent website dedicated to this subject – covering the perspectives of both clinician and owner, offering advice on diagnosis and treatment – and listing support resources for owners of affected dogs.

<http://www.canineepilepsy.co.uk/>

However, it is worth mentioning what to do if your dog does start to seizure.

You **MUST** remain calm. From the outside seizures look strenuous, vigorous and painful – keep reminding yourself that your dog is unconscious or unable to feel pain or experience anything that is happening.



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Move your dog out of harms way if needed (and remove other dogs/pets/children from the vicinity) but otherwise keep your hands clear of your dog (do NOT put your hand in your dogs mouth during a fit – even if you see blood from a bitten tongue - the muscle spasm in a Labrador's jaw is more than strong enough to remove a human finger!)
Remove sources of noise, bright light or other agitations.

Most fits only last a few minutes and there is little that can be done in this timeframe – so stay with your dog and stay calm! Once the seizure starts to subside your dog will start to regain consciousness, but will be very disorientated and exhausted. It is imperative that the surroundings stay dim, quiet and calm – and that you provide reassurance and a calming presence. Once things have settled down it's time to clean up a little (incontinence is common during a fit) and seek veterinary advice. A dog in recovery after a single seizure is rarely in need of immediate veterinary attention so, again, stay calm whilst you obtain advice.

On rare occasions fitting fails to end – or recurs in short clusters. In this situation you should seek more urgent veterinary attention.

And remember – there will probably be a few vet bills to meet – but overall, the vast majority of canine epileptics, once stabilised, live long happy healthy fully-active lives.

The Trust wishes to extend their most grateful thanks to Bobby White-Adams for his invaluable contribution to our rescue work.

This help sheet has been written by Robert White-Adams MRCVS. Robert has extensive experience working in mixed and small animal veterinary practice and anything to do with Labradors. He got his first and now sadly missed TLRT dog in 2001. Robert opened his own veterinary practice in 2008 which welcomes all pets, but especially Labradors.

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These Information Sheets are intended to serve as a guideline to new homes and foster homes. They are the result of many years of experience from our helpers and we hope that they provide a useful insight. Please note that these are only guidelines and The Labrador Rescue Trust, its helpers and officers make clear that it is the responsibility of each home/foster home to recognise the needs of their dog and to react to those needs. The Trust, its helpers and officers cannot be held responsible for the behaviour of any individual dog.

THE LABRADOR RESCUE TRUST COMPANY

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