



## SEIZURES

There are numerous causes of seizure activity in dogs and cats. Seizures may be due to extra-cranial causes (outside the head) or intracranial causes (inside the head).

### Common extra-cranial causes include:

- **Toxins** – this is NOT a complete display but shows the wide variety of toxins that can cause seizures in animals



- **Metabolic causes**

- Hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar)
- Liver disease
- Severe kidney disease

**Common intracranial causes include:**

- Inflammatory brain disease (eg GME or “Little White Shaker Syndrome”)
- Infectious brain disease (eg Toxoplasmosis)
- Epilepsy
- Brain tumours
- Congenital disorders (eg hydrocephalus)

People often think of epilepsy when their animal has a seizure. Epilepsy is a diagnosis of exclusion in animals. This means that there is no specific test for it, and other causes of seizures need to be ruled out before a diagnosis of epilepsy can be made.

We begin with blood tests, but spinal taps and/or CT of the brain may be required to exclude many causes.

**What do I do if my pet has a seizure?**

Firstly, make sure they cannot hurt themselves. Put something soft underneath their head and use gentle restraint to stop them thrashing.

Remember that your pet is not their normal self – some animals can be aggressive. Do not put yourself in harm's way. Don't try to put your hand in their mouth. If this is their first seizure then get them to a vet.

If your pet has already been diagnosed with a seizure disorder then ensure that when they are on their own they are in a safe environment. For example, away from pools, stairs, balconies, etc.

Keep a diary of any seizure events – what was happening before the seizure, duration of the seizure, and what the animal was doing whilst seizing (e.g. paddling limbs, salivating, violent tremoring, partial twitching, urination, defaecation etc). How long did the after-seizure period last for before becoming normal? A diary will help you recognise patterns of when/how often seizures are occurring and learn of any triggers. Many epileptics will seizure around the full moon!

### **When do I need to seek veterinary help?**

- If this is your pet's first seizure then seek veterinary help immediately to try to determine the cause
- If your pet has already been diagnosed with a seizure disorder seek veterinary help if
  - a) seizures occur more frequently than once a month
  - b) has multiple seizures in a 24hour period (cluster seizures)
  - c) seizures continuously for >5min (status epilepticus)