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Your Pets and Seizures

What are Seizures?

A seizure is an episode of abnormal electrical activity in the brain, that can cause twitching, shaking, and collapse.

The “pre-ictal” stage of a seizure is the time shortly before a seizure occurs, and is usually when your pet may seem restless or nervous. You may also notice your pet start to drool or cry.

The “ictal” stage is when your pet may have loss of consciousness, increased salivation, involuntary urination or defecation, and/or muscle spasms or contractions. A grand mal seizure is when your pet loses consciousness. During a grand mal seizure, your pet may fall over and seem paralyzed, aside from paddling the legs or uncontrolled muscle spasms.

The “post-ictal” stage is the time right after your pet has experienced a seizure. Your pet may be confused, restless, wobbly and/or nervous. These episodes may last minutes to hours.

What Causes Seizures?

Seizures may stem from many problems including Valley Fever, trauma, cancer, toxins, inflammation, low blood sugar, cardiovascular disorders, inherited disorders, or liver or kidney disease. Initial testing for seizures many times begins with a blood panel, though advanced imaging such as CT imaging or radiographs are often recommended to rule out many of these ailments.

Treatment

If your pet is experiencing a seizure that lasts longer than several minutes, or if your pet is having multiple seizures in short time periods (cluster seizures), your veterinarian may use intravenous medications to help stop the seizures. There are also various oral medications that may help if your pet is experiencing seizures. It is important to monitor blood levels after the initial month of your pet being on a seizure medication, to ensure that your pet is on the appropriate dose.

Seizures can be a scary experience for any pet parent to witness. During a seizure, you can help your pet by keeping them from hurting themselves on surrounding objects. Never put your fingers or hand in or around your pet’s mouth. Generally, seizures are not painful, but your pet may be very confused or scared. Prolonged seizures (More than 5 minutes) can result in brain damage or death, so you should take your pet to the vet if the seizure is not resolving. Try and stay calm, and call your veterinarian for further instructions.