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Independent, Kind and Honest Veterinary Care in the Heart of Ryedale

Fits and Seizures

Fits and seizures are a distressing event for both pet and owner. Most fits only last a few seconds, though as a concerned owner they seem to last a lot longer! What should I do if my dog is having a fit? Fits are characterised by collapse with violent spasms of the legs and gnashing of the jaws. The animal may salivate profusely and also often defecate and urinate during the episode. It is important not to attempt to restrain the dog – although it is advisable to drag the dog to an open space if they have collapsed somewhere that their convulsions may cause them to harm themselves. If you must handle a fitting dog, always avoid going near the head in case you are accidentally bitten. If possible, darken and quieten the area the dog is in (e.g. close curtains, turn off TVs and radios). A fit causes the dog to become very warm as a lot of energy is used during them, so opening a nearby door or window, or covering with a damp towel may help. It is not always necessary to see a vet immediately after a fit, however veterinary attention must be sought if the dog is not coming out of the fit, or has repeated fits in quick succession (cluster fitting). What causes fits? A fit is as a result of an electrical disturbance in the brain. There are several conditions which may cause fitting, but the three main ones are:

- Epilepsy
- Underlying metabolic disease
- One-off episodes of unknown cause

What treatment will my dog need?

If we suspect underlying metabolic disease we would recommend a blood test to help us find out what that is and then treat that condition accordingly. If the dog is well and has had no other history of fitting, initially we would give a thorough check over, but we often do not give any treatment. As with people, it is not unusual for a well dog to just have a one-off episode and suffer no further attacks. If the episodes continue or we are suspicious of epilepsy, then we would start on anti-epileptic drugs. These drugs reduce the likelihood of further fits occurring, and treatment would be life-long. These drugs are relatively cheap, however they can become toxic so their concentrations in your dog's blood must be monitored by periodic blood tests.