

Epilepsy and your pet

What is Epilepsy?

- Epilepsy is a term used to describe abnormal and uncontrolled electrical activity in the brain. In dogs and cats, this usually results in a seizure or 'fit', and can be very distressing to experience. Commonly, the animal loses control of their bladder or bowels, and may twitch, tremble or suffer from more violent convulsions with rigid or paddling limbs. They may also drool or froth at the mouth.
- Many cases of Epilepsy in pet animals are 'idiopathic', that is without a known cause. However, in some cases, fits can indicate a more serious underlying disease, such as liver dysfunction, or problems within the brain itself.
- Your vet may recommend procedures such as blood tests or brain scans to rule out other problems before embarking on long-term treatment.

Your pet's medication

- Your pet may be prescribed one or more drugs to control their fits.
- Epiphen is commonly used (phenobarbitone), as it is the most reliable at controlling seizures in pet animals.
- Your pet is likely to need medication for a long period of time. It is important that your pet is monitored regularly, both to make sure the medication is effective, and also to make sure that the medication is causing no harm.
- Most animals do not experience any problems even after taking this medication for a long time. However, it is a powerful drug, with potentially serious side effects if used in the wrong way.



Drug safety

- It is advised to wear gloves while handling this drug, and wash your hands after use.
- High doses of Epiphen are linked to increased appetite and weight gain, liver damage or sluggishness and drowsiness.
- If using Potassium Bromide, high doses may cause sleepiness or vacantness, or a drunken or staggering gait.
- If you see any of these signs, speak to your vet before changing the dose at all.
- It is important that doses are given regularly and not missed. Stopping the medication suddenly can increase the risk of fits occurring.
- Epiphen may not be safe to use if your pet already has liver problems. Therefore we recommend a screening blood test for liver function prior to starting treatment.

Ongoing Monitoring

- After starting treatment, we will need to take a blood sample 3-4 weeks later. The sample must be taken just before you normally give a dose, but you should dose regularly as normal prior to the test. The levels of drug in the bloodstream and the liver function are tested.
- It can take 2-3 weeks for the medication to begin controlling the fits effectively, so it is possible for your pet to have fits during early treatment. Blood samples are recommended every 4-12 months, depending on your pet's stability. Further tests may be advised if the dose of medication is changed, or your pet is unwell.
- Please keep a record of any seizures your pet has, including how long it lasts and how severe it was. Bring this information to each check up with you.



Dispensing Advice

- Keep an eye on how many tablets you have left, and re-order in plenty of time. It is important not to miss doses, as this can increase the risk of a fit.
- We can dispense up to 2 months of medication at one time. The reception staff will be able to tell you when your next check up is due.
- We will need to re-examine your pet at least once every six months in order to dispense ongoing medication. The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons issue strict guidelines regarding prescription drugs.
- Please try to give us 24 hours notice if you need further medication. Every prescription needs to be checked by a vet before you will be able to collect them.
- Every drug purchase includes a small fee called the Medicines Advice Fee. This is applied both to medication purchased at Riverside, or under prescription from another source. It reflects the time and expertise that goes into preparing your pet's medication, and also the fact that we at Riverside are responsible for the health and well-being of your pet throughout the duration of treatment.