

and/or radiographs of the skull. In difficult cases, an EEG (electroencephalogram) or electronic recording of the electrical brain waves, may be indicated. Rarely, however, do these various diagnostic aids tell the veterinarian exactly what the cause is and he must rely on his experience and his ability to interpret the facts gained from all the sources to arrive at the correct diagnosis.

#### TREATMENT FOR EPILEPSY

There are many different drugs that are available to treat epileptic animals. These are the same drugs, in many cases, that are used in human epilepsy. Some of the more familiar ones are: Dilantin, Phenobarbital and Primidone. The decision to institute treatment in an epileptic animal can be a difficult one to make. The length and severity of the seizure itself, the frequency of seizures and the owner's feelings are taken into account. Many times the medication is the only answer but there are some negative factors also. We know that the medication is not a cure. The animal will always be an epileptic. Medication will usually decrease the frequency and severity of the seizures but rarely do we stop the seizures entirely. Stopping medication usually precipitates seizures. Medication must always be given daily as we cannot predict when the seizures will occur. Many times we find that an animal will experience seizures after medication has been instituted. This is not uncommon, especially in the first few days of treatment. The thing to remember; once we start medication you must be patient. It may take weeks or months to find the correct medication and correct dosage. Please feel free to phone us if the medication is not controlling the seizures adequately.

#### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Epilepsy is a disturbing problem but we find that in the majority of cases we can control its effect and the animal can lead a normal life. You, as the animal's owner, must try to understand this disease and work with your veterinarian towards an acceptable solution for all. The seizure episodes are upsetting to the entire family but we feel that as long as they are infrequent, they do not cause the dog pain. Occasionally we see a dog go into a seizure which does not stop in the usual one to three minute interval. We call this problem Status Epilepticus. This happens very rarely, but if it does, notify us immediately. This is an emergency situation and must be treated as soon as possible. We give the dog a general anesthetic. This stops the seizure and usually when the anesthetic wears off, the dog is fine.

#### WHAT TO DO WHEN A DOG HAS A SEIZURE

Once the seizure starts, there is nothing you can do to stop it. Usually the seizure lasts one to three minutes and then stops on its own. During the seizure it is best not to handle the animal. Make sure, however, that he is away from stairwells and if he is on a couch or bed, put him on the floor to avoid injury from falling. During the seizure, the dog has no control over his actions. He will not bite intentionally but the jaws may snap uncontrollably and cause injury; especially with a large animal. If the seizure seems prolonged or severe, please feel free to call us.