



ISSUE No

BRAINWAVE

ISSUE No

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This newsletter is distributed quarterly to members of

THE PHYLLIS CROFT FOUNDATION FOR CANINE EPILEPSY

BRAINWAVE CHECKED AND APPROVED BY DR PHYLLIS CROFT OBE PHD FRCVS BEFORE PUBLICATION

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Preliminary Notification

Our AGM will be held at the Canine Academy, Tollerton, Nottingham, on Sunday Aug 21st 2005.

This year we will have the use of a paddock field and hall giving space to shelter/exercise your dog in the event of hot or inclement weather.

Clare Rusbridge will give a short talk.

Please contact Margaret James if you would like further details when available unless already indicated on the renewal form

HELPING HUMANS TOO

We recently received a heart-warming letter from the Reverends Jackie and John Davis thanking us for information we sent about milk thistle (silymarin). Their collie Tess was taking it to good effect but Jackie & John also "emailed the information to a young woman who had such severe liver damage she was on the list for a transplant. She was already far into the expected time of survival – Continued on page 2.

"The Colyton Gang" left to right, David & Jackie Presnail, Sue Kightley, Maureen Turner, Angela Axbey, Pat Trickey, Trisha Shackleton (see page 3)

COLYTON COMES UP TRUMPS -- AGAIN - FOR THE PCFCE



with no match in prospect. "She shared the details with her specialist who followed it up and put her on it. The result was that she survived far beyond the anticipated time limit - long enough for a match to be found. She had a successful transplant early last year and is doing well. Obviously no one knows how she would have done had she not been put on silymarin (milk thistle) but the likelihood is that it helped keep her going long enough to receive a transplant and her specialist now has another treatment in his armoury for similar patients."

I would like to share our thanks with Epil-K9 and the member who first sent us a book on milk thistle by Christopher Hobbs, as these are the two sources where I found out about milk thistle in the first place. Thanks are also due to Jackie and John for their care and thoughtfulness.

We already know that milk thistle works for some and not for others but in this case it has probably saved a life. It has to be worth trying for all dogs on phenobarbitone and indeed all drugs metabolised by the liver.

Copies of "Milk thistle - the Liver Herb" by Christopher Hobbs can be borrowed from the PCFCE Library. See back page for my contact details - Mandy.

BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING

Norman Smith writes:

I hope all is well with you and your animal companions. I am writing to introduce a lady to the group, a lady I recommended to Mandy who I feel sure will be an asset to a majority of members. Her name

is Jo Wynn. Some members may know her already.

Jo has been a bereavement counsellor for some 25 years and for some time has used her skills to help animal owners come to terms with the loss of their beloved companion.

I know many owners including myself who will sing Jo praises for helping them at the darkest of times.

Talking with Jo and other owners actually prepared me for when I lost Gunner past year. It still hurt like crazy but Jo gave me the strength I needed "to be there for Gunner". In Jo's words, my collapse can come later but not then.

I know members will benefit from speaking to Jo. Not only after a loss but also before. Jo is a most approachable lady and members should not feel awkward or uncomfortable about phoning her. She really knows exactly how you are feeling.

Jo Wynn Dip.C., SHA, BYSA (H.M.D.) writes:

Greetings and a bright and wonderful New Year to everyone. My name is Jo Wynn. I am a qualified bereavement counsellor of 25 yrs experience, a registered healer with the Sussex Healers Association, of Native American heritage and a Shaman by birth. I have shared my life with many cherished animal companions over the years both domestic and wild but my personal struggle though the loss of two special canine friends, Saffy and her son Blu, both severely epileptic, led me to want to be there for others. Bereavement

DNA EPILEPSY BLOOD BANK SAMPLES NEW ADDRESS

If you are considering sending a blood sample to the DNA archive, you should be aware that there has been a change of address.

The address (formerly Veterinary Immunology, Veterinary Science Building, Crown St, Liverpool, L69 7BR) should be changed to read:-

CIGMR
Medical School Stopford
Building,
The University of
Manchester,
Oxford Road,
Manchester,
M13 1BJ

If you received

BRAINWAVE 27 see Form 1
- Instructions for DNA
collection).

PLEASE MAKE SURE
YOUR VET HAS THE
CORRECT ADDRESS
BEFORE YOU SEND THE
SAMPLES

counselling is not a magic wand, a panacea or a cure for grief but a listening ear and an empathic sharing heart. I am available 24/7.

Jo can be contacted on 01444 412931 and has offered to write a regular column for the newsletter, although obviously any consultation will be completely private.

WAG & BONE SHOW

6th August 2005

Windsor Great Park

PCFCE VET SEMINARS



**Meeting room Vétoquinol UK
HQ in Buckingham on the day**

The PCFCE took part in two seminars designed to provide continuing professional development for veterinary surgeons. PCFCE member vets were invited to both.

The first, organised by The Stone Lion Veterinary Centre, was held on 2nd Nov 2004. This was an evening event held at the Ebbisham Centre in Epsom, Surrey. Clare Rusbridge was sponsored to speak by the PCFCE and David Wales spoke on living with an epileptic dog.

The first veterinary seminar entirely organised by the PCFCE was held on 29th Nov 2004 at the headquarters of Vétoquinol UK (Buckingham).

David Wales opened the PCFCE seminar with a Power Point presentation about the PCFCE and on living with an affected dog.

Clare Rusbridge, our star speaker, gave two lectures, "Epilepsy - what you really need to know" & "Epilepsy, difficult cases and status epilepticus." It was a big commitment from her but, as always, she rose to the challenge with her usual aplomb.

Our final talk was given by Wendy Hallows who had

driven all the way down from Manchester to publicise the DNA Archive.

We would like to thank all our speakers for their time and commitment to this very worthwhile event. Examples of the feedback we received were "Excellent idea and very well done" and "Clare Rusbridge's presentation was superb – relevant, useful, approachable and very well presented".

Lecture notes were prepared and presented on a CD-ROM which also included details of the PCFCE, the DNA archive and other selected articles that we thought might be of interest to vets and their clients.

Life was made easier because the venue was super with all the necessary equipment on hand and the staff could not have been more helpful. All in all the concept has proved very successful and worthwhile.

COLYTON DOES IT AGAIN COFFEE MORNING 28 OCT 2004

By Pat Trickey

My near neighbours and new members of the PCFCE, Jackie & David Presnail (and their wirehaired Dachshund Hester) kindly offered to host a coffee

Visitors enjoying a chat



morning at their home to raise funds for the Foundation. The date was set, plans made and posters pinned up and around Colyton.

Two days before the event, the local forecast made our hearts sink: "Severe weather warning for Devon & Cornwall, winds up to 80mph, torrential rain and flooding". For once, the weather forecast was correct but on the morning of our event, the sun came out! After lunch, the winds picked up again and it rained horizontally!



**Sue Kightley & her home made
fare**

Lots of people attended, spent their money on a large raffle (all prizes donated by the kind folk of Colyton) and then tried to win a Christmas cake by guessing its weight (made by Angels Axbey's sister Trisha).

As usual one of the main attractions was Sue Kightley's homemade fare. There were mouth-watering cakes, flans, pies and sausage rolls; organic jelly (from Sue's own grapes) bramble & apple jams & marmalade and a selection of pickles. Sue is a wonderful supporter of our charity and always refuses to accept any money for ingredients.

As Jackie Presnail and her helpers kept the bottomless cups of coffee flowing, many of

Continued on page 9

ICE PACK - A TECHNIQUE TO STOP SEIZURES

I recently read details of a surprising technique that anyone can try to stop seizures publicised on the "Epi-Guardians Angels" website. The following is an article written by *Joanne Carson*.

"This article on using an ice pack to stop seizures is about an exciting new technique that has recently been published in a leading veterinarian journal. This technique may be able to help you shorten or even stop your dog's seizure before it begins, and may even help reduce the amount of post-ictal recovery time, and to return your dog to full functioning more quickly.

The technique was tested--both in an ER and a regular veterinary hospital as well as by people in their own homes--on 51 epileptic dogs. In all 51 cases, the technique either stopped the seizure or shortened the usual duration of the seizure, and in many cases, the post-ictal (after-seizure) recovery time was also shortened. These results were published in an article by H. C. Gurney, DVM, and Janice Gurney, B.S., M.A. The article is entitled, "A Simple, Effective Technique for Arresting Canine Epileptic Seizures." It appeared in The Journal of the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association, in the January-March 2004 issue, pages 17-18.

Probably the most exciting part of this discovery is that the technique is not in any way

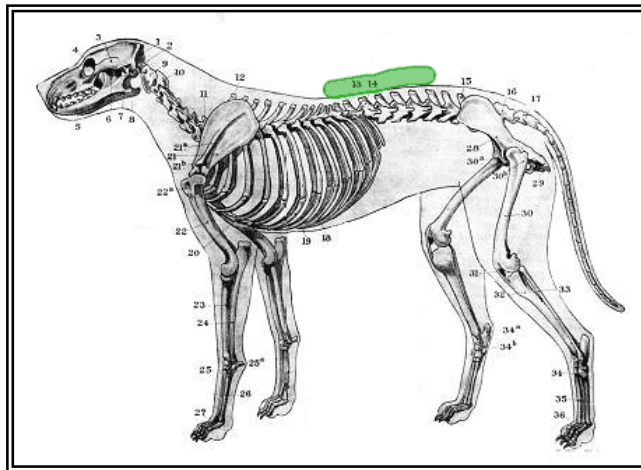
harmful to your dog, and it does not involve giving extra medications. It is as simple as applying a bag of ice to the lower-midsection of your dog's back (the small of the back), and holding the bag firmly in position

until the seizure ends. The exact area on the back is between the 10th thoracic (chest) and 4th lumbar (lower back) vertebrae (bones in the spine); what this means is that the top of the ice bag should rest just above the middle of your dog's back, following along the spine, and drape down to the lower-midsection of the back. See diagram.

Look for numbers 13 and 14 on the diagram. Number 13 on the diagram is the 13th thoracic (chest) vertebrae (there are 13 total); count back toward the head to number 10: that is your start point for the ice bag. Number 14 on the diagram is the 1st lumbar (lower back) vertebrae (there are 7 total); count toward the tail to number 4: that is your end point for the ice bag.

With a properly sized ice bag, you should not have to worry about being too exact: aim for the middle of the back, and the correct area will be covered. Application of ice to other areas of the body (head, neck, legs and other areas of the spine) was not found to be effective. Ice bags on the middle of the back was the only area found to work.

The article reports that the



sooner the ice is applied, the better the results. So you should have an ice pack ready and prepared: if you have a small dog, fill a small-sized (quart) ziplock freezer bag with cubed or crushed ice and keep it in a particular spot in your freezer. When you hear or see a seizure begin, run for the ice or, if you live with another person, have one person run for the ice while the other runs to help the dog. Place the ice bag in the lower midsection of your dog's back and hold it there firmly until the seizure stops. If this technique works as reported, you should not have to wait as long as your dog's usual seizure, and you may also see an improvement in the post-ictal period's duration.

The article reports that people who tried using a bag of frozen vegetables instead of ice had less success than those who used ice, so keep a bag of ice ready or a commercial ice pack used to keep soft drinks cold in a cooler. The article also indicated that dogs with cluster seizures are a special case and may need their usual protocols after the seizure, so if your dog is a clusterer, follow your veterinarian's instructions for using valium or write to our website for the rectal and oral valium protocol.

We are very excited about this discovery, and would be so pleased if it turns out to be as effective as reported. If you decide to use this technique on your dog, please let us know how it turned out: was it successful, or not. Send them to me at: JCarson6@AOL.COM. We would like to be able to add more testimonials from those who have used it, and whether or not they found it effective. If it is effective, it will be a godsend to many of us who now feel we can do nothing for our dogs but comfort them until a seizure ends.

***Rescue Remedy Sundae
a tip from the Epi
Guardian Angels Website***

Some of our Guardian Angels have found that a Rescue Remedy Sundae can be helpful following a seizure. The Rescue Remedy Sundae is made by putting a little Rescue Remedy on a small amount of vanilla ice cream as soon as a dog is safely able to eat following a seizure. If your dog does not respond to Rescue Remedy you can use plain ice cream. You should use a good all-natural, preservative-free ice cream and please only use vanilla. It takes only a very small amount - too much can do more harm than good. For dogs under 50 pounds, a teaspoon or two is plenty; 50-100 pound dogs can handle about one or two tablespoons; and dogs over 100 pounds can have a scant 1/4 cup.

The reason behind this is that blood sugar levels often drops drastically before or during seizures and the ice cream will bring the blood sugar level back to normal. The way it works is the sugar in the ice cream will

bring the blood sugar level back up to normal while the butter or fat holds the sugar in suspension so that it doesn't cause a sugar rush which plain sugar or honey or molasses would. Bringing the blood sugar level up too quickly is not good which is why we recommend ice cream. Also, bringing the blood sugar level up to normal can help to prevent additional seizures. Low blood sugar itself can cause seizures. If your dog has very obvious pre-seizure behaviour and you give a little ice cream before a seizure happens, this can sometimes stop the seizure altogether. Please be sure to thaw the ice cream a bit by letting it sit out on the counter or "zapping" it in the microwave briefly - you don't want to chill your dog too much or have him gulp down frozen ice cream.

***Melatonin a tip from the
Epi Guardian Angels
Website***

My reservation about this tip is that although natural, melatonin is a hormone, so please discuss this with your vet before use. I am unsure of availability in the UK but it can be purchased by mail order/internet. Mandy

"Is your dog seizing between 11 pm and 6 am? Then please try Melatonin. Melatonin virtually stopped the "after bedtime, early a.m." seizures in Tahoe and many other dogs.

We had been giving Tahoe melatonin at bedtime for over two years. One of the reasons we started it was to help Tahoe sleep through the night. He was a very restless sleeper who got up several times a night, ask to go out, sniff around, and want to

come back in. Once we started with the melatonin it worked to create a normal sleep pattern. As a bonus I definitely noticed a decrease in his night time seizures. He didn't have a seizure after midnight in more than a year after melatonin!

The following are excerpts from an email sent by Dr. Linda Aronson, DVM, MA; from the Department of Clinical Studies, School of Veterinary Medicine, Tufts University, North Grafton, MA. to Rich Brady, who has several epileptic dogs:

"To treat thunderstorm phobia, I use a dose of 3mg for a 35-100 lb dog. Smaller dogs get 1.5 mg, and larger dogs may get 6mg. The dose is given either at first evidence of thunderstorm - dog becomes agitated, distant rumbling of thunder, etc. or prophylactically before the owner leaves the house when thunderstorms are predicted. Dose may be repeated up to 3 times daily. The latter may be used as a dose for animals with more generalized stress related disorders.

I have used it, carefully, in dogs with autoimmune disease and also those on MAOIs; none had a problem. I have had search and rescue dogs successfully given melatonin to combat their fears of flying in turbo prop planes. It was the only treatment that allowed most of them to relax and yet let them perform their duties at the end of the flight.

Success is still running about 80%. Most useful for noise phobias, including thunderstorms, fireworks, gunshot, planes, helicopters, hot air balloons, show site noises, bird song, truck and other road noises. It also seems to help

some cases of lick granuloma and separation anxiety."

What is melatonin? - Technical explanation.

<http://www.all-natural.com/nutri.html>

"Melatonin is produced in the body by the pineal gland in the brain. Tryptophan, an amino acid found in food, is taken in by the body and made into serotonin, a neurotransmitter (conductor of nerve signals). The pineal gland takes the serotonin and makes it into melatonin, but only during the night. (The enzymes in the brain which change serotonin into melatonin are inactivated by light). Norepinephrine is another neurotransmitter which assists in melatonin production. It acts as a catalyst to melatonin production by stimulating cells in the pineal gland to begin making melatonin in the absence of light. Sometimes, for one reason or another, the body does not produce adequate amounts of melatonin for its needs. This can result in insomnia and depression, among other symptoms. The body's ability to synthesize melatonin may decrease with age."

Many epi-parents have had amazing results with melatonin in helping their epi's sleep at night, reducing restlessness and reducing seizures that happen between bedtime and 6 a.m. I would say from experience that melatonin works in about 90% of our pups. We haven't seen any develop a tolerance either to melatonin. I think if your dog is having seizures after bedtime it would be useful to try. If your dog has no change after a couple weeks then discontinue but I really think it is worth a

try to combat seizures after bedtime. Not to forget it is a true cure for restless sleepers - canine and human!

References

-- *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, Volume 215, No.1, July 1999. "Vet Med Today: Animal Behaviour Case of the Month" - Linda Aronson, DVM, MA; - Department of Clinical Studies, School of Veterinary Medicine, Tufts University, North Grafton, MA.

-- May 2000 issue (Volume 3, Number 5) of *The Whole Dog Journal*, "Bring in Da Noise." NH Dodman, DVM - Linda Aronson, DVM

-- *Natural Health and Longevity Resource Centre*

IN MEMORIAM

Edith Andrews

The return of BRAINWAVE with the word "deceased" written across the envelope informed us of the death of Edith Andrews. Edith was a staunch supporter of the Foundation from July 1998 and we were deeply saddened by the news. Robbie, a Norfolk terrier, was Edith's devoted companion and he died in 2002 at the age of 11. Edith continued to support us and always sent a lovely letter with her Christmas card and donation. We shall miss her.

BRIAN RAY

We were very sorry to receive a telephone call from Brian Ray's son informing us of the death of his father. Brian Ray was a retired veterinary Surgeon and lifelong friend of Dr. Croft. He gave a generous donation to help us launch the Foundation and we shall always be grateful for his support. We send our deepest sympathy to his family.

PLUTO D'EATH

Our sympathies go to the D'eath family on the loss of Pluto aged

11 years.



Pluto

Maverick Scott

(Meaning one and only)

*That was my boy
Supremely elegant and loyal
You loved teddy bears and your
squeaky toy
My beloved and trusted friend
Right to the end
You gave your all to me
I hope I gave as much to you
The torment has left you now
Be happy and healthy in heaven
above.
I send this Maverick with all
my love
God Bless*

My extra special thanks to Kate Arrowsmith, the most kind, gentle and considerate vet we have ever had. I know with all she did for Maverick she was deeply upset too, thank you Kate. My thanks too to Clare, Mandy, Margaret and Kate Chandler at the Queen Mother Veterinary Hospital. Thank you for everything. *Lyn Scott*



LAFORA DISEASE

Epilepsy Gene Found

A gene for a form of inherited canine epilepsy has been discovered by an international team lead by Drs. Berge Minassian and Hannes Lohi. The team includes our very own Clare Rusbridge of the Stone Lion Veterinary Centre.

Although this discovery is related to a very specific form of epilepsy, Clare is hopeful that this will lead to a "greater understanding of the mechanism of seizures and possible treatment. Also Berge Minassian is interested in epilepsy in general - I am sure he would help find the gene in other breeds if the DNA was available".

An article on the DNA Epilepsy Archive and how to donate blood samples was given in **BRAINWAVE 27** but new members can obtain information from Mandy Cliffe or Margaret James who can also supply forms.

Epilepsy gene identified in dogs

The following extracts have been taken from the BBC website with their kind permission.

Scientists have identified a faulty gene that causes epilepsy in dogs. The finding has allowed researchers to develop a test that could soon help owners breed out the disease. But the discovery should also aid the quest to understand the more severe human form of the condition, Lafora disease, and other similar afflictions.

The latest development, reported in "Science" magazine, is an example of how the human and dog genome projects are



Photo Clare Rusbridge

expected to benefit both species. Researchers are comparing and contrasting the "life codes" of the two mammals with other animals to track down the genetic causes of ill health.

Light Starter

The study in "Science" was produced by a Canadian/UK team led from the Hospital for Sick Children (HSC) in Toronto. The researchers showed that the jerky behaviour and seizures suffered by purebred miniature wirehaired dachshunds (MWHD) were caused by a form of epilepsy called EPM2.

The affected dogs all share a mutation in their EPM2b gene involving multiple repeats in the DNA code that prevent the proper production of protein. It is thought 5% of MWHDs in the UK have the disease and perhaps as many as 25% may be carriers of the faulty gene.

Owners usually start to notice a problem with their pets when they are about six years old. Although incurable, the disease can be managed with a controlled diet and drugs.

"These animals will jerk in response to quite specific things, such as sudden movement in their visual field," said Science co-author Clare Rusbridge, a veterinary neurologist at the Stone Lion Veterinary Centre in (Cont'd)

**THE VET ALERT COLLAR -
PHONE MARY ROUSE ON
01295 711579**

Vet Alert

THE COLLAR WITH A DIFFERENCE!

THIS COLLAR IS DESIGNED FOR DOGS WITH PROBLEMS THAT REQUIRE DAILY MEDICATION - EPILEPSY - HEART DISEASE - KIDNEY PROBLEMS - ALLERGIES AND SPECIAL DIETS

When the dog is found the collar attracts immediate attention. The purse on the collar carries relevant information.

① On Label
Write details of dog
Cut out label

② On collar
Locate plastic label (on D ring)

Replace brown card with folded label. LEAVE CLEAR PLASTIC BORDER Press two sides firmly together

© Designed for Honey

A POSTCARD FROM BANDIT

It is a wonderful winter here in Connecticut. Lots of snow and cold weather. Even a real blizzard – just what a furry Elkhound loves. I am still very well. I had a problem with diarrhoea for a few months. We tried many things to clear it up and Dr Matz was worried it could be my liver or a tumor. I'm finally better and have to gain some weight I lost. Imagine that! Here I was a fat overweight dog for years and now I have to gain weight. Being lighter sure does help my arthritis and bad knee so mom has to make sure I don't gain back too much weight.

My little cousin, Nico, the eight month old Toy Poodle came for a sleep over last weekend. We had a lot of fun playing although he has so much more energy than I do. Now I know why Kandy used to growl at me when I was younger.

Have a great winter and spring.

Love

Bandit

Wimbledon, London.

"They also do it when there is flickering light - this is one of the photosensitive epilepsies. One of the simplest managements is doggy sunglasses, which means they can be walked and enjoy life," she told the BBC News website.

Relentless progression

If dogs can cope with EPM2, the same cannot be said of humans suffering with Lafora disease. "In terms of frequency, it is very rare but it is a horrible disease," said colleague Dr Berge Minassian, whose research group at the HSC has now identified two faulty genes associated with Lafora's. "The seizures get more and more frequent and severe, and within a year or two they are totally uncontrollable by any means."

For dogs the benefits are more obvious. With a new test for the faulty EPM2b gene, breed clubs could soon start a programme of controlled mating to eradicate the disease in MWHs and other breeds, such as basset hounds, in which it has become amplified.

This approach is already being used in Irish setters, for example, to tackle a blinding condition known as progressive retinal atrophy (PRA), and an immune disorder called canine leukocyte adhesion deficiency (Clad).

Just like EPM2, both are the result of recessive mutations - a dog must have two copies (one from each parent) of a "bad" gene to show the disease.

Familiar patterns

The UK Kennel Club is about to stop registering any Irish setter unless it is clear of Clad.

Doggy sunglasses can help control in dogs with photosensitive epilepsy

Photo Clare Rusbridge



"Because purebred dogs are highly selected, breeders choose the dams and sires they put together, we can impose restrictions to select against dogs that are likely to pass these genes on to future generations," commented Dr Jeff Sampson, the Kennel Club's canine genetics co-ordinator.

There is great hope that purebred dogs, with their large litters and long pedigrees, will offer science the opportunity to rapidly locate faulty genes that in humans would be far more difficult to find because few family members may be alive to study their DNA.

"Human clinicians are increasingly turning to purebred canine populations because these will have similar, if not identical, diseases to us and the clinicians will identify the gene in the dog and that will then give them a handle to start looking in human populations," explained Dr Sampson.

The Toronto hospital research group is already searching for other instances in which the particular pattern of expanded DNA repeats seen in the dachshunds may be driving ill health.

We've gone on to check the human genome as well as the genomes of cattle and other species and have found a number of genes that contain such repeats, and we are in the process of figuring out if they are associated with diseases," said Dr Minassian.

Editor's Note

Clare Rusbridge has sent a copy of the Veterinary Press release issued on 7 January 2005. Due to its technical nature it will be published in our next veterinary supplement.

Sturdy doggy sunglasses made by a company called "Doggles" can be purchased over the Internet. They are now sold by so many companies I could not recommend a site. Top of the range 100% UV protection Doggles Hot Rods cost around £29.99. My Japanese Akita Hardy wore them for a couple of years and tolerated them exceptionally well.



Minkie Robertson's epilepsy linked to Lafora's Disease

20/09/1991 – 11/03/2002

MWHD Minkie Robertson's seizures were linked to Lafora's disease after an examination by Clare Rusbridge in 2000. Her first fit occurred as she lay watching the TV and, on the

advice of Betty's vet, she was kept away from TV, indeed her loving owner actually disposed of the box!. Minkie's condition improved and the link with TV was later confirmed when Betty went into hospital and Minkie had a fit 3 days after watching TV at a friend's house.

The other symptom Betty noticed was that Minkie would flinch a lot, especially if she moved her hand near her right eye or in response to any sudden movement. Minkie was later diagnosed as almost blind and as we have learned from the above, Lafora's can cause blindness.

COLYTON DOES IT AGAIN – continued from page 3

the older residents of Colyton found the morning provided an opportunity for social contact with old friends in comfortable surroundings.

Maureen & Pat on the door



My thanks to everyone who contributed to making the morning so successful – especially Jackie and David Presnail for inviting us into their home (and allowing us to park on their lawns). Watch this space; Jackie has plans for a summer event in their large

garden: Barbeque/wine & cheese etc should be a good fundraiser.

**£135.00 was raised for the
PCFCE.**

Pat Trickey

YOUR NEWS

Fluke Kennedy



I thought I'd write to introduce myself and to tell you about my wonderful vet Dr



Brian Barnett MRCVS and the equally wonderful nursing staff at the Hackney branch of Goddard Veterinary Group.

First things first, my name is Fluke and I'm a rather handsome 5 month old Golden Retriever pup who has recently been diagnosed with idiopathic epilepsy.

My Mum took me to see Brian for a check up. He was great and soon put me at my ease. I had a thorough examination and blood tests to try and find the cause of my fits. Although I am my mum's second Epi-pet, Brian provided us with lots of information regarding epilepsy, discussed the importance of keeping seizure diaries and a future treatment plan if seizures become worse.

Both my mum and Brian were keen to try and use alternative therapies to help control my seizures. I was started on skullcap and valerian and nux vomica 30c. Unfortunately this course of treatment failed. I experienced 10 fits in as many days - back to Brian who put me on a loading dose of potassium bromide and arranged an urgent referral to the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) in Hertfordshire where Dr Holger Volk decided I needed an urgent MRI scan and CSF tap.

I spent 4 days at the RVC undergoing different tests to determine if my epilepsy was idiopathic or had a treatable cause. I'm still waiting for the results of one blood test that was sent to the USA but Dr Volk told my mum that he is 95% certain that my epilepsy is idiopathic. I am on KBr which I tolerate well although I still have seizures.

Dr Volk informed my mum that in the new year they are going to establish an epilepsy centre at the Queen Mother Hospital for animals in Hatfield and that they are researching the use of human anticonvulsants in canine epilepsy. Dr Volk has already explaining to my mum that I may need to go on to one of these drugs to try and establish control of my seizures. I am due to visit the RVC again sometime in January. I'll keep you informed of my progress. In the meantime if anyone is looking for a vet that is well-informed, empathetic, kind, hard working and most importantly, willing to listen, I would recommend my "super vet", Dr Brian Barnett, he's one in a million. I know that with mum's love, Brian's hard work and of the support the PCFCE, I will grow up and

live a long and happy life.

***Until next time, love and licks,
Fluke Kennedy XX***

Update 26 December 2004

Fluke's seizures have not been controlled using potassium bromide alone. His seizures had become more frequent and Fluke returned to the RVC to see Dr Volk. He is currently involved in a drug trial using human anticonvulsants in dogs that have been unresponsive to either phenobarbitone, KBr or a combination of the two.

Fluke was re-examined and after a lengthy consultation was prescribed levetiracetam (Keppra) 250mgs every 8 hours. He has only been on Keppra for 6 days, he is still having seizures but we are keeping our fingers crossed. The drug has been quite successful in the United States with 54% of dogs gaining very good control of their seizures. Fluke will be on the trial for 16 weeks. He will be reviewed at the RVC in two months to check on his progress.

Jackie has phone again since and says that blood tests show that Fluke's potassium bromide concentration levels have dropped. They are looking at the salt content of his diet to see whether a recent change could be responsible for the KBr being eliminated more quickly than before.

January 2005

Poor old Fluke is still having problems but he and his Mum Jackie are fighters. Phenobarbitone has been added to his drug regime as he is still having lots of fits. The Keppra

is being phased out and he is on milk thistle to support his liver. Dr Brian is supporting them both all the way.

NEW PHARMACOLOGICAL TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR PHARMACORESISTANT EPILEPTIC PATIENTS

A Trial conducted by Holger Volk PhD & Kate Chandler BvetMed, DipECVN, PhD, MRCVS.

If you wish your dog to be considered for this trial, your vet should contact the Queen Mother Hospital for Animals, Hatfield Herts on Tel:01707 666366 Fax: 01707 649384.

Background

Epilepsy is the most common chronic neurological disorder in dogs. The term epilepsy simply refers to repeated seizures. In the normal brain, nerve cells (neurons) communicate using electrical or chemical signals. Signals between nerve cells can either be excitatory (activating) or inhibitory. Seizures are caused by abnormal electrical activity between nerve cells. If there is an imbalance in nerve cell activity, an animal may show seizures.

In some cases epilepsy can be controlled using medication (anti-epileptic drugs, AEDs), which are usually given in the form of tablets. AEDs regain the balance of nerve cell activity and stop abnormal activity spreading through the brain. About two thirds of dogs can be treated successfully. However about one third of dogs continue to have a high seizure frequency.

We are therefore investigating using well-established human anti-epileptic drugs as an additional option for dogs.

The Trial

The aim of this study is to find a new, well-tolerated anti-epileptic drug for dogs in order to more successfully treat epileptic dogs. This would ideally have fewer side effects and be more effective than currently used treatment. In human medicine there has been considerable progress in the treatment of epilepsy over recent decades. Human doctors have a great variety of anti-epileptic drugs to choose from. Unfortunately some of these are not effective in dogs and some show severe side effects. However, to our knowledge the two anti-epileptic drugs of this study, topiramate and levetiracetam, have not been reported to cause any serious side effects in dogs. They have also been shown to be effective in human patients with drug resistant epilepsy.

The trial lasts 16 weeks and involves two groups of dogs, selected from dogs with epilepsy resistant to previous treatment. Your dog will receive either levetiracetam or topiramate treatment as an add-on drug. Your dog is fully examined at the start of the study. After a period of two months, your pet will be re-examined and assessed concerning seizure frequency, duration, intensity and any problems that you may have experienced with the new medication. If your dog continues to have fits the dose of the drug will be raised. If your dog shows any side effects at any time, treatment will be

stopped and we will change treatment as necessary. At the end of the study, we will again assess seizure frequency, duration, intensity and side effects.

The treatment with topiramate or levetiracetam will be offered only in epileptic dogs that did not respond to a standard epileptic drug such as phenobarbitone and/or potassium bromide.

In dogs, no major side effects have been described for those two anti-epileptic drugs. However, it is possible that major side effects could occur in your dog. If this is the case, your dog will be hospitalised for observation while we stop the new medication. There are many potential benefits of the study to your dog and other epileptic dogs and we hope that it will improve the treatment of epilepsy and quality of life for the epileptic patient in the future.

COMMITTEE STUFF

Secretary's Say

Thanks to the publicity drive undertaken by the Committee and all the poster displays we have had a large increase in our membership and we extend a very warm welcome to all our new members. I hope we have been able to reassure everyone that primary epilepsy is not a death sentence and with the right veterinary treatment and the dedication of the owner most dogs can live normal, happy lives. There is no reason to limit exercise or cease agility training. The only restriction being not to breed from affected

dogs or bitches.

Although it is but a distant memory, I hope you all had an enjoyable Christmas. Thank you for all the lovely cards, donations, and unsolicited renewals. Renewal forms have now been mailed and if you sent yours in early but would like to give us an update on your dog for future inclusion in Brainwave, please send it to Mandy. We are hoping to hold our AGM at the Canine Academy in Nottingham this year but this is yet to be confirmed. Jo and Steve Burnard attended a Seminar at the Academy in November and were so impressed with the venue they came back with all the brochures. Mandy and I will be going to see the facilities as soon as I can make arrangements to leave Jim. It does seem to be ideal as dogs are welcome.

Our Christmas card sales were very good and this year we were able to make a reasonable profit. Our thanks to Pat for organising the design, printing and sales and to all our members who supported the project. The design was voted the best one so far. Colyton folk are great fundraisers and Pat sent a cheque for £135 from the coffee morning held at the home of new members David and Jackie Presnail. There was also another £10.35 from the collecting box at the Spar Shop. Pat also informed me that thousands of pounds were raised by the Town for the Tsunami Fund.

A Professor from the Department of Biological Sciences at the Open University wrote to ask permission to reproduce the collage of dogs

on our card for use in the Open University's Course on Evolution. This course "about the evolution of domesticated dogs and the genetic origins of modern breeds, will be taken by about 800 students for about 10 years starting in 2007". As the PCFCE will be named as the source of the image, it will give us good publicity.

I hope the coming year will be kind to you all.

Margaret James

Chairman's Chatter

Do you have time to spare, preferably access to a computer and an enquiring mind? If so we would welcome you onto the committee. Fancy helping with publicity, tackling an occasional newsletter or organising an event? - Then we need you! If you live near another committee member, it would be great for brainstorming ideas and moral support. Put your name forward for the AGM by calling Margaret on 01277 630145 or Mandy on 01296 715829.

With such a small committee we cannot expand or increase our activities as we would wish. Please get in touch if you can help.

As we are currently without a publicity officer, I have been sending out letters with posters and information - 350 in the last three months. If you feel this is your forte, why not get in touch. We will be planning for a pitch at the Wag & Bone and in view of the success of our veterinary seminars, discussing future venues and events with David Wales. Take care and thank you for your support.

Mandy Cliffe

COMMITTEE & CONTACTS PAGE

This page has been removed to protect those who lost their dogs and who may no longer wish to be contacted.