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CANINE EPILEPSY: A SURVEY ON THE OWNERS' PERSPECTIVE OF QUALITY OF LIFE

Introduction

Epilepsy implies a long-term commitment and has major impacts on both dog as well as owner.

Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to investigate the owners' perspectives on caring for a dog suffering from epilepsy and how they perceive the quality of life (QoL) of their pet.

Materials and methods

A SurveyMonkey questionnaire was used. Owners were approached using social media, referring veterinarians, the Dutch Veterinary Association. Questions focussed on general aspects, seizures, medication, and quality of life (scored from 1 to 10).

Results

Four hundred and thirty complete surveys were received. Overrepresented were the Border Collie (38), Golden Retriever (19), Labrador retriever (22), and crossbreeds (46). Idiopathic epilepsy was seen in 295 dogs, structural in 31, reactive in five and other causes in 99. Generalised seizures in 323 dogs and focal in 103. There was a clear breed difference for both onset and outcome. Phenobarbital was most used (235) next to bromide (140) and imepitoin (88) either alone or in combination. Side effects were seen for all drugs with the highest incidence for fenobarbital. Alternative treatments were among others CBD oil (34), and special diets (15). The severity, frequency and leaving the dog alone, had the highest impact. Medicating and caring, the lowest. The QoL score was significantly lower for generalised seizures compared to focal seizures. No relation was found for the different medications and QoL score. There was a significant difference for the Border Collie and French Bulldog (low QoL) compared to the Chihuahua, Golden retriever and Dachshund (high QoL). Most owners (233) said that a frequency of one every 4 months or less was reasonable.

Conclusions

QoL is improved if the severity of the seizure as well as frequency is reduced. A breed specific approach may be beneficial as well.

References

- 1) Wessmann et al., 2014. Evaluation of quality of life in dogs with idiopathic epilepsy. Journal of veterinary internal medicine. 28(2), pp. 510-514.