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"Pip" - Jack Russell with fits



Pip

Last week Pip, a ten-year-old Jack Russell terrier, was brought in by her owner. She had only been in the owner's possession for six weeks, and not much was known of her previous history, except that she was suffering from arthritis and on treatment with anti-inflammatories for this.

She had had two fits the previous night. Witnessing a fit for the first time can be a quite scary experience for the owner.

A fit is a short malfunction within the brain, which results in abnormal behaviour. The malfunction in the brain can be caused in several ways. A disease in the brain could cause fits, but it also could be a disease outside the brain, like an endocrine disease.

To investigate a possible disease outside the brain, Pip was admitted, and blood was sent off to a laboratory for several tests. She stayed in hospital overnight and had four more fits before she went home the following day.

A neurological examination is also performed in the investigation process, but had to be delayed until later that week, because results can be abnormal soon after a fit.

Pip continued to have fits that evening and the following day.

Two days later Pip came back for her neurological examination. Her blood results had all come back normal in the meantime, leaving me still in the dark about the cause of her fits.

Luckily her owner had brought a tube of Radian-B for me, a product used by humans to rub on sore muscles. She had rubbed this on Pips sore arthritic legs the morning before the fits started, and was wondering if this had caused a problem.

Not familiar with this product, I instructed Tracy, one of our nurses, to phone the Poisons Information Service in London. They told us that two ingredients of the Radian-B, camphor and menthol, can actually induce fits in dogs, and in large quantities can even be fatal.

It is worth considering that all the available tests and investigations would not have yielded a diagnosis in Pips case. Because pets cannot talk for themselves, the key to many answers is often in the history volunteered by the owners. Even though some information may seem irrelevant or insignificant to an owner at the time, it can be of great help to the vet. Thankful that, with the help of Pips owner, we had found the cause of Pips fitting, I am sure that she is on her way to make a complete recovery.

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This article is available on the Fairfield Veterinary Centre web site at www.fairfield-vets.co.uk

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