

# WELSH SPRINGER SPANIEL JOINT HEALTH GROUP

**Secretary:** Mrs Arlene Tester  
Walnuts  
44 High Street  
Dry Drayton  
Cambridge  
Cambs CB23 8BS  
Email: [arlene.testers@mailfence.com](mailto:arlene.testers@mailfence.com)  
Tel: 01954 780820



**Chairman:** Position vacant  
**Treasurer:** Anne Morgan  
**Committee:** The committee comprises:  
Two delegates, one reserve Delegate and One Trustee from each of the four Breed Clubs (NEWSSC, SEWSSC, WSSC AND WSSCSW)

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## DISEASES AFFECTING THE WELSH SPRINGER SPANIEL FACT SHEET 2 – EPILEPSY

### WHAT IS EPILEPSY?

Epilepsy is not a single condition. It is a term used to describe recurrent fits, seizures or convulsions.

### WHAT SIGNS SHOULD I LOOK FOR?

The symptoms vary with the severity of the seizures and range from un-coordinated movements to the dog collapsing with rigid leg movements and salivating excessively. The dog may also lose control of it's bowel and bladder. Attacks may last a few seconds or longer and the dog may appear unconscious. In very severe cases, the dog has one fit after another – this is called 'status epilepticus'.

### WHAT IS THE USUAL AGE FOR THE PROBLEM TO APPEAR?

The onset of Primary Epilepsy is usually between one and three years of age but this is only a guide and cases do occur earlier and later; up to around the age of five years.

### WHAT CAUSES EPILEPSY?

- **Secondary Epilepsy:** This describes those cases where a cause such as trauma, brain tumour, liver disease etc. is diagnosed.
- **Primary Epilepsy:** In cases where no apparent cause is found then the term 'idiopathic' or primary epilepsy is used. In these cases the dog's genetic make-up is such that they have spontaneous seizures. In Primary Epilepsy, the 'faulty' copy of the gene must be inherited from the father **and** mother.

### IS THERE ANY TREATMENT?

Control of fitting is by the use of drugs e.g. one commonly used is pheno-barbitone, but there are many others in use. The vet will endeavour to find a drug and dose that will control the fitting but enable the dog to live a normal life.

### HOW DO I ENSURE THE PUPPY I BUY WILL NOT FIT?

This is not possible at the moment. Primary Epilepsy is thought to be an inherited condition caused by a recessive gene or genes. At present there is no conclusive test for the presence of this gene or genes in individual dogs.

### **WHAT IF MY DOG STARTS TO FIT?**

Contact your vet for the appropriate treatment. The Joint Health Group would greatly appreciate, in the first instance, if you would contact the Secretary (name and details are on the heading of this leaflet) who will assist you with passing the information to the JHG. Also contact the breeder of your dog who will want to be aware of the situation.

### **INVESTIGATION OF PRIMARY EPILEPSY IN THE WELSH SPRINGER SPANIEL**

Research at the Animal Health Trust and other institutions as part of the Canine Genome Project has produced a genetic map for the dog. Information from markers on this map will help the study of canine genetic disorders. By this means ('DNA fingerprinting') it is hoped to pin-point the genes involved in Epilepsy. A blood test might then be produced to identify carrier dogs before breeding. For many years blood samples, or cheek swabs, taken from fitting Welsh Springers Spaniels and their immediate family have been sent to the AHT for inclusion in this work. Owners of fitting dogs, their parents and siblings, are strongly advised to submit cheek swabs to the AHT. Cheek swabs may be obtained from the Secretary (Name and contact details at the beginning of this leaflet).

### **BREED GUIDELINES**

It is recommended that parents of known fitters should not be bred from again and that extra care needs to be taken when breeding from the siblings of fitters. The Joint Health Group has compiled a list of matings that have produced fitting puppies. This has been published in the current Year Book of the WSS Club and the Newsletters of the other Breed Clubs.

**Dated: January 2018**

**Other fact sheets are produced by the WSS Joint Health Group.  
Contact the Secretary for further information.**