



## ***Seizure Guidelines for Foster Parents***

### **What is a seizure?**

Seizures are the manifestation of abnormal activity occurring within the brain. The abnormal activity is the result of the misfiring of neurons, leading to the abnormal behavior and physical signs noted during an active seizure episode. Not all seizures appear the same; read below for various types of seizures that may occur in animals.

### **Types of seizures:**

Generalized seizures: These have the classic seizure appearance. Animals are noted to have loss of consciousness, whole body involuntary body movement, and stiff muscles most easily noticed in the limbs. These seizures may last several seconds up to two minutes.

Cluster seizures: This is defined when two or more seizures of any kind that occur within a 24-hour time period. This can be a medical emergency.

Status epilepticus: This refers to continuous seizure activity lasting longer than five minutes. This is a medical emergency.

Focal seizures: There are two main types, simple and complex.

Simple focal seizures can have small area of abnormal activity such as continuous facial twitch. The animal remains conscious with normal behavior during this time, unlike in generalized seizures.

Complex focal seizures will show a loss of consciousness or behavioral changes but be limited to one specific location or abnormal behavior; ex: continuous fly biting behavior.

### **Phases of generalized seizure activity:**

Aura/ Pre-ictal: Typically, this stage occurs minutes before the actual seizure and during this time a period of altered behavior may occur. This is not always recognizable, but the animal may hide, appear anxious, attention seek, pant, salivate, or whine just prior to a seizure.

Ictus: This is the actual seizure event. It usually lasts seconds to one to two minutes and is self-limiting, but longer seizures can occur. It is common to see animal urinate or defecate during generalized seizure activity.

Post-ictal phase: After the seizure, many dogs exhibit a postictal phase characterized by disorientation. This may last minutes to hours. The most commonly reported signs are behavior changes, prolonged sleepiness, confusion, transient blindness, and eating voraciously.



If you observe any of these stages and/or signs - it is likely that the animal has had a seizure.

**If you suspect a seizure occurred but did not witness it:**

Depending on the length of time from when the seizure occurred and when you observe the animal, they may have regained normal behavior, responsiveness to stimuli such as calling their name, normal energy, or physical touch.

Instead, look for other signs. The animal may appear soiled, with feces or urine noted throughout the haircoat. This urine or feces may also be not just at the hind end but also noted along other atypical areas- such as chest, neck, shoulders. Additionally, if you observe hypersalivation or excessive drooling when you see the animal this may be a sign that a seizure has previously occurred. Additionally, if the pet has any of these signs couple with increased lethargy- there is a high suspicion that a seizure may have occurred previously.

**Next steps:**

If a seizure is noted within the home please have the animal rechecked through foster within a 24-hour period of the suspected seizure. If possible, try to record any observations noted during the period of seizure activity. This would include the animal's mentation, behavior, urination/defecation during episode, the animal's responsiveness to name calling or simple touch, duration of seizure episode, along with day and time of seizure. It is also appropriate to video tape this episode so the veterinary and foster team can also observe what occurred.

If you notice any episodes defined above as cluster or status epilepticus, please have the animal seen immediately through DFL or an after-hours veterinary center as these conditions can be life threatening emergencies.

**For veterinary and foster staff:**

**Seizure History and Follow Up Questions:**

1. What was the dog / cat doing at the start of the event?
2. Was there any limb rigidity during the event?
3. Did the dog / cat urinate and or salivate during the event?
4. Was the dog / cat responsive to you during the event?
5. What was the dog / cat like immediately after the event?

\*\*\* Please feel free to reach out to foster anytime with questions, concerns or if more information is needed.

**Shelter Number** 303-751-5772 Ext 7290

**Foster Emergency Cell** 720-334-1422