

EPILEPTOID CRAMPING SYNDROME IN THE NORWICH TERRIER: CLINICAL CHARACTERISATION AND PREVALENCE IN THE UK

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Episodic muscular hypertonicity in Norwich terriers (NT) was first reported in a brief letter in the Veterinary Record in 1984. Since then there have been anecdotal reports and the condition has remained poorly characterised. The aims of this study were to characterise clinically NT epileptoid cramping syndrome (ECS), and to estimate its prevalence in the UK.

The owners of NT born since 1 January 2000 were invited by the UK Kennel club and NT breed club to complete a specifically designed questionnaire aimed at identifying affected and unaffected NT, and clarifying the clinical characteristics of NTECS.

The questionnaire was returned for 198 NT. Of these, 26 (13%) NT were classified as affected by NTECS following revision of the questionnaires, videos of the episodes, veterinary medical records and telephone interview with the owners. All NT were clinically normal between episodes. No significant abnormalities were detected on diagnostic investigations, including electroencephalography (which was performed in 2 NT). Mean age at the first episode of NTECS was 3 years. The episodes were characterised by sustained muscular hypertonicity, dystonia of the pelvic or all 4 limbs, and difficulty or inability standing up and walking. Consciousness was normal. Episode frequency varied both between and within individuals. Stress, anxiety, excitement, and variation in daily routine were recognised as episode triggers in 13 NT. Episode duration was 2-5 minutes in the majority of NT (range <1-30 minutes).

Several affected NT were genetically related. Genetic investigations to identify causal mutations are in progress.

