

Veterinary neurology experts collaborate for first ever global consensus on pets with epilepsy

- **International Veterinary Epilepsy Task Force (IVETF) develops common language to be used in the 'chain of care' of canine and feline epilepsy**
- **IVETF establishes guidelines to improve care for veterinary patients with epilepsy**
- **IVETF establishes a framework and standards for future trials**

An international body of vets and scientists have come together to set out unified and standardised guidelines for the research, diagnosis and treatment of canine and feline epilepsy for the first time ever in veterinary medicine.

Made up of 26 veterinary practitioner, neuropharmacology, neuropathology and neurology experts from around the world, the IVETF has produced seven 'consensus statements' that outline a number of recommendations and classifications on all aspects of the condition. It is the first time this many veterinary neurology clinicians and neuroscientists have formally agreed on the key aspects of canine and feline epilepsy.

Epilepsy is one of the most common diseases encountered in veterinary practice. The prevalence of the illness means there have been numerous research studies carried out over the years. But, despite a frequency in the research work carried out, there remains a lack of consistency throughout these studies.

This lack of cohesion has made it difficult for owners and professionals to communicate adequately on the issue of pet epilepsy. This is because classifications, definitions, therapeutic outcome measures, neuroimaging and neuropathological standards have differed between many of these studies, making it difficult to draw comparisons and significantly limiting their scientific impact.

This also affects the ongoing understanding of epilepsy in relation to professional guidelines which, in turn, affects clinicians when diagnosing and advising treatment options for the condition.

Professor Holger Volk, is Clinical Director of the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) small animal referral clinic and a specialist in Neurology and Neurosurgery. He established and chaired the IVETF in 2014: "Looking back over last year's journey and finally seeing the end product of having multiple consensus statements is one of the most exciting things I have

been involved with in my career” he says.

“I feel very privileged, humbled and honoured to have worked and learned from all these highly skilled, knowledgeable and prestigious colleagues. Going forward, we are looking forward to continuing the journey we have started so successfully. I have no doubt that this work will have the impact we hope and will lead to better care for our patients with epilepsy.”

The IVETF’s collaborative approach has identified a ‘chain of care’, from the animal’s breeder and owner through the first opinion practitioner to the neurology specialist and neuroscientist. Each statement aims to be a ‘user friendly’, pragmatic, reliable and valid tool that benefits all these groups. The IVETF is also building a scientific and clinical framework to manage and research epilepsy appropriately. This work will provide the foundation for an agreed common language in the area of companion pet epilepsy.

The working group was made up of veterinary and human neurologists and neuroscientists, practitioners, neuropharmacologists and neuropathologists. Professor Andrea Fischer from LMU Munich was one of those involved and is excited about the IVETF making a difference, she said: “The future of veterinary neurology lies in conducting multicenter studies throughout the world focusing on investigation of genetics, pathophysiology and treatment of epilepsy. Thus a common language and clear description of breed-specific epilepsy syndromes is urgently needed”.

Dr. Bhatti, Head of the Clinical Neurology Department at Ghent University, added: "For the medical treatment of canine epilepsy, the question ‘to treat or not’ has been mainly replaced by when to start, which drug or drugs should be used, and when treatment changes should occur. This consensus proposal aims to provide a common language in treatment planning which is essential for comparing future study results."

Reader Dr. Rusbridge at University of Surrey and Fitzpatrick Referrals said: “Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) is regarded as an important diagnostic test to reach the diagnosis of idiopathic epilepsy and there is a need for a standardized veterinary epilepsy-specific MRI protocol which will facilitate more detailed examination of areas susceptible to generating and perpetuating seizures, is cost efficient, simple to perform and can be adapted for both low and high field scanners.”

The IVETF has agreed on the following consensus statements involving more than 25 co-authors (Berendt M¹; Bhatti SFM²; De Risio L³; Farquhar RG⁴; Fernández-Flores F⁵; Fischer A⁶; Hülsmeier VI⁶; Jovanovik E⁷; Löscher W⁸; Long S⁹; Mandigers PJJ¹⁰; Matiasek K¹¹; Milne M⁹; Muñana K¹²; Packer, RMA¹³; Pakozdy A¹⁴; Patterson EE¹⁵; Penderis J¹⁶; Platt S¹⁷; Podell M¹⁸; Potschka H¹⁹; Pumarola MB⁵; Rosati M¹¹; Rusbridge C^{7,20}; Stein VM²¹; Tipold A²¹; Volk HA¹³; Wagner E¹¹). The IVETF hopes that each statement will help advance the field of canine and feline epilepsy and ultimately lead to better care for our patients:

1. International Veterinary Epilepsy Task Force consensus report on epilepsy definition, classification and terminology in companion animals (chaired by Prof. Mette

Berendt)

<http://doi.org/10.1186/s12917-015-0461-2>

2. International Veterinary Epilepsy Task Force Consensus Proposal: Diagnostic approach to epilepsy in dogs (Chaired by Drs. Luisa De Risio and Sofie Bhatti)
<http://doi.org/10.1186/s12917-015-0462-1>
3. International Veterinary Epilepsy Task Force current understanding of idiopathic epilepsy of genetic or suspected genetic origin in purebred dogs (Chaired by Dr. Velia-Isabel Hülsmeier)
<http://doi.org/10.1186/s12917-015-0463-0>
4. International Veterinary Epilepsy Task Force consensus proposal: Medical treatment of canine epilepsy in Europe (Chaired by Drs. Sofie Bhatti and Luisa De Risio)
<http://doi.org/10.1186/s12917-015-0464-z>
5. International Veterinary Epilepsy Task Force Consensus Proposal: Outcome of therapeutic interventions in canine and feline epilepsy (Chaired by Profs. Heidrun Potschka and Andrea Fischer)
<http://doi.org/10.1186/s12917-015-0465-y>
6. International Veterinary Epilepsy Task Force recommendations for a veterinary epilepsy-specific MRI protocol (Chaired by Drs. Clare Rusbridge and Sam Long)
<http://doi.org/10.1186/s12917-015-0466-x>
7. International Veterinary Epilepsy Task Force recommendations for systematic sampling and processing of brains from epileptic dogs and cats (Chaired by Profs. Kaspar Matiasek and Martí Pumarola Batlle).
<http://doi.org/10.1186/s12917-015-0467-9>

The research paper has been published in the academic journal, BMC Veterinary Research

Notes to Editors

The International Veterinary Epilepsy Task Force (IVETF) was set up in 2014 by a group of Veterinary Neurology Specialists and non-specialists. It is an independent organisation and its main aim is to provide the veterinary community, breeders and pet owners with key advice on the key areas in the field of epilepsy.

The Royal Veterinary College (RVC) is the UK's largest and longest established independent veterinary school and is a constituent College of the University of London. The RVC offers undergraduate, postgraduate and CPD programmes in veterinary medicine, veterinary nursing and biological sciences, being ranked in the top 10 universities nationally for biosciences degrees. It is currently the only veterinary school in the world to hold full accreditation from AVMA, EAEVE, RCVS and AVBC.

A research-led institution, in the most recent Research Excellence Framework (REF2014) the RVC maintained its position as the top HEFCE funded veterinary focused research institution.

The College also provides animal owners and the veterinary profession with access to expert veterinary care and advice through its teaching hospitals; the Beaumont Sainsbury Animal Hospital in central London, the Queen Mother Hospital for Animals (Europe's largest small animal referral centre), the Equine Referral Hospital, and the Farm Animal Clinical Centre located at the Hertfordshire campus.

Centres which have been involved in the development of these consensus statements.

- ¹Department of Veterinary and Clinical Sciences, Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Copenhagen, Frederiksberg C, Denmark (Mette Berendt)
- ²Department of Small Animal Medicine and Clinical Biology, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Ghent University, Salisburylaan 133, Merelbeke 9820, Belgium (Sofie Bhatti)
- ³Animal Health Trust, Lanwades Park, Kentford, Newmarket, CB8 7UU, Suffolk, United Kingdom (Luisa De Risio)
- ⁴Fernside Veterinary Centre, 205 Shenley Road, Borehamwood, SG9 0TH, Hertfordshire, United Kingdom (Robyn Farquhar)
- ⁵Department of Animal Medicine and Surgery, Veterinary Faculty, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Campus UAB, Bellaterra, 08193 Barcelona, Spain (Fernandez-Flores; Martí Pumarola Batlle)
- ⁶Clinic of Small Animal Medicine, Centre for Clinical Veterinary Medicine, Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Veterinärstr. 13, 80539 Munich, Germany (Velia-Isabel Hülsmeier, Andrea Fischer)
- ⁷Fitzpatrick Referrals, Halfway Lane, Eashing, Godalming, GU7 2QQ, Surrey, United Kingdom (Eli Jovanovik, Clare Rusbridge)
- ⁸Department of Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmacy, University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover, Bünteweg 17, 30559 Hannover, Germany (Wolfgang Löscher)
- ⁹University of Melbourne, 250 Princes Highway, Weibee 3015, Victoria, Australia (Sam Long, M Milne)
- ¹⁰Department of Clinical Sciences of Companion Animals, Utrecht University, Yalelaan 108, 3583 CM, Utrecht, The Netherlands (Paul Mandigers)
- ¹¹Section of Clinical & Comparative Neuropathology, Centre for Clinical Veterinary Medicine, Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Veterinärstr. 13, 80539 Munich, Germany (Marco Rosati, E Wagner, Kaspar Matiasek)
- ¹²Department of Clinical Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine, North Carolina State University, 1052 William Moore Drive, Raleigh, NC 27607, USA (Karen Muñana)
- ¹³Department of Clinical Science and Services, Royal Veterinary College, Hatfield, AL9 7TA, Hertfordshire, UK (Rowena MA Packer, Holger A Volk)
- ¹⁴University Clinic for Small Animals, Clinical Department for Companion Animals and Horses, University of Veterinary Medicine, Veterinärplatz 1, 1210 Vienna, Austria (Akos Pakozdy)
- ¹⁵University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine, D426 Veterinary Medical Center, 1352 Boyd Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108, USA (Edward E Patterson)
- ¹⁶Vet Extra Neurology, Broadleys Veterinary Hospital, Craig Leith Road, Stirling, FK7 7LE, Stirlingshire, United Kingdom (Jacques Penderis)
- ¹⁷College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Georgia, 501 DW Brooks Drive, Athens, GA 30602, USA (Simon Platt)
- ¹⁸Chicago Veterinary Neurology and Neurosurgery, 3123 N. Clybourn Avenue, Chicago, IL 60618, USA (Michael Podell)
- ¹⁹Department of Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmacy, Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Königinstr. 16, 80539 Munich, Germany (Heidrun

Potschka)

- ²⁰School of Veterinary Medicine, Faculty of Health & Medical Sciences, University of Surrey, Guildford, GU2 7TE, Surrey, United Kingdom (Clare Rusbridge)
- ²¹Department of Small Animal Medicine and Surgery, University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover, Bünteweg 9, 30559 Hannover, Germany (Veronika Stein and Andrea Tipold)

To request further information or an interview please contact:

Jordan Kenny at Communications Management

T: 01727 733882

M: 07557 163744

E: Jordan@communicationsmanagement.co.uk