

Case Underscores Importance of Total Avoidance of Glutens

Sonny Carter made a very difficult decision: He was going to end the suffering of his four-year-old German Shepherd, Shadow. The gorgeous dog had experienced seizures since he was about a year old. At first they were infrequent, but they had steadily increased in number and severity.

“I was feeling so bad for what the dog was going through,” explains Carter. Shadow’s seizures were getting worse, and he was experiencing many of the common side effects of seizure activity. “He didn’t know who we were after a seizure and would growl at us when we tried to help him,” Carter adds.

Carter’s vet prescribed phenobarbital and Valium for Shadow’s seizures. The drugs didn’t cause a noticeable reduction in the number of seizures, although the Valium used during and after seizures did seem to help calm the dog. This didn’t make his owner feel a lot better, however. “We were just doping him up and letting him go through them,” explains Carter.

Since Carter’s vet felt there were still medications to try in combating Shadow’s epilepsy, he declined to euthanize the dog. Desperate, Carter took Shadow to another clinic, looking for someone who would support his decision. The vet was Dr. Symes.

Dr. Symes had already recommended diet changes for more than a dozen dogs with epilepsy, which resulted in a significant reduction or in many cases elimination of their seizures. He explained the concept to Carter and asked him to give a change in diet a try with Shadow.

Dr. Symes wasn’t making the recommendation lightly, or discounting Carter’s pain at suffering through the seizures with his beloved dog. In fact, the veterinarian had the opportunity to join Carter in his helplessness, as Shadow had a series of seizures while in Dr. Symes’ clinic. Dr. Symes and Carter sat on the floor of the exam room, well past closing time, as Shadow went in and out of seizure for four hours. Still, the veterinarian thought the dog should be given a chance on a new diet.

Finally, Carter was able to take his dog home, along with a bag of IVD Duck and Potato food. He started feeding the new food immediately and the change was almost immediate. Shadow had a few small seizures the first few months, and then was seizure-free for nine months. Carter finally felt comfortable that he didn’t have to watch Shadow so closely.

“Dr. John made a big difference in the way this dog was getting around,” says Carter.

SAD ENDING

Unfortunately, Shadow’s recovery wasn’t as long-lived as Carter hoped. Shadow started having seizures again. One tragic day, Shadow had a seizure while out of Carter’s sight and came out of it in a frantic state. Disoriented and agitated, he got out of the yard and was hit and killed by a car.

Carter wasn’t sure what had caused the return of Shadow’s seizures until a month after the accident. “My neighbor asked where Shadow was, since he hadn’t seen him for awhile,” says Carter. He told his neighbor about the dog’s health issues and special diet, and what had happened to him. Horrified, the neighbor confessed that he’d been feeding Shadow toast each morning as a special treat.

This isn’t the only time Dr. Symes has seen treats cause seizures. He’s seen it happen with other patients, and had e-mails from people whose dogs had similar reactions. Sometimes just one meal of the wrong food, or treats with offending ingredients, and the seizures start again.



Shadow enjoyed nine months nearly seizure-free; forbidden treats caused his demise.