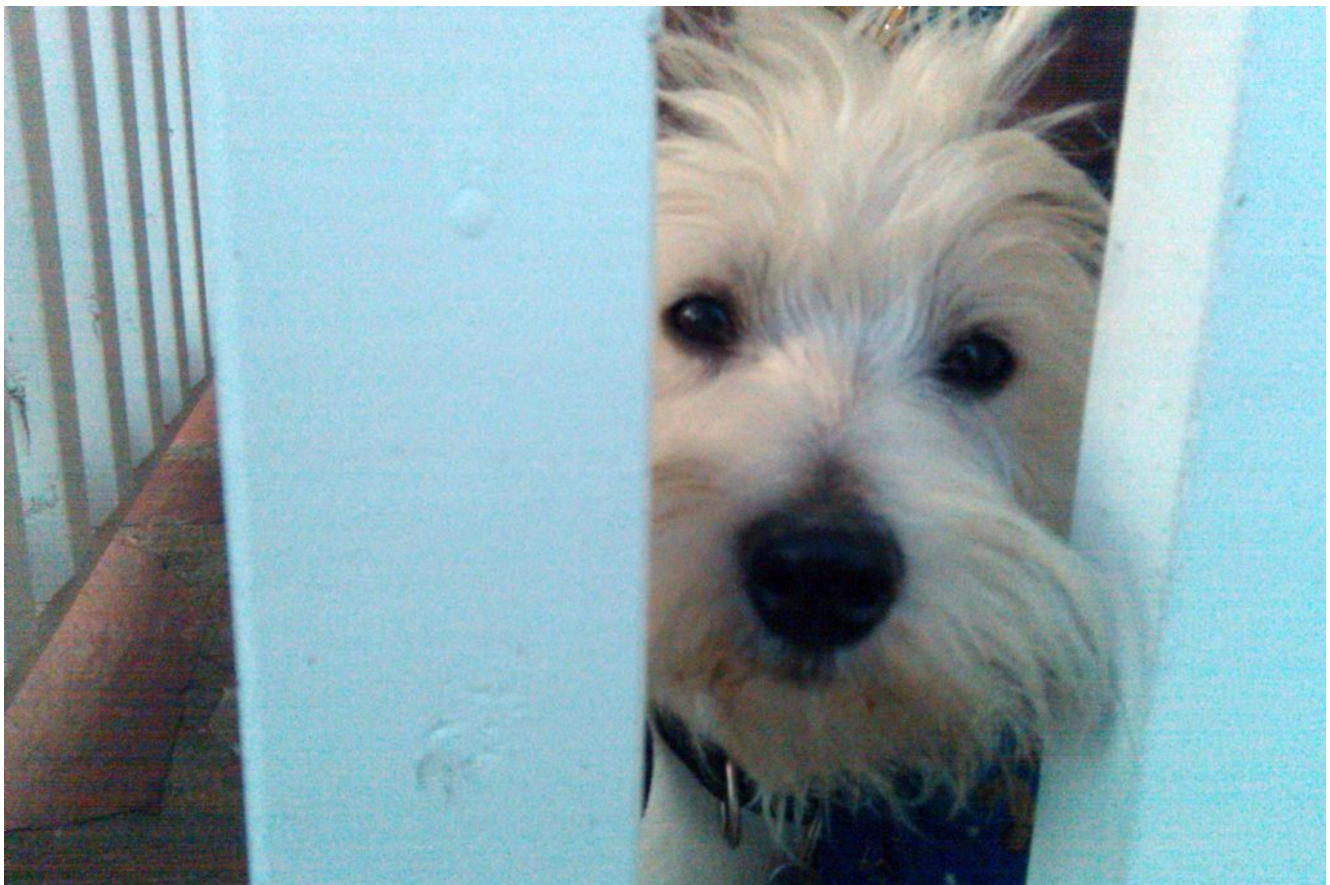


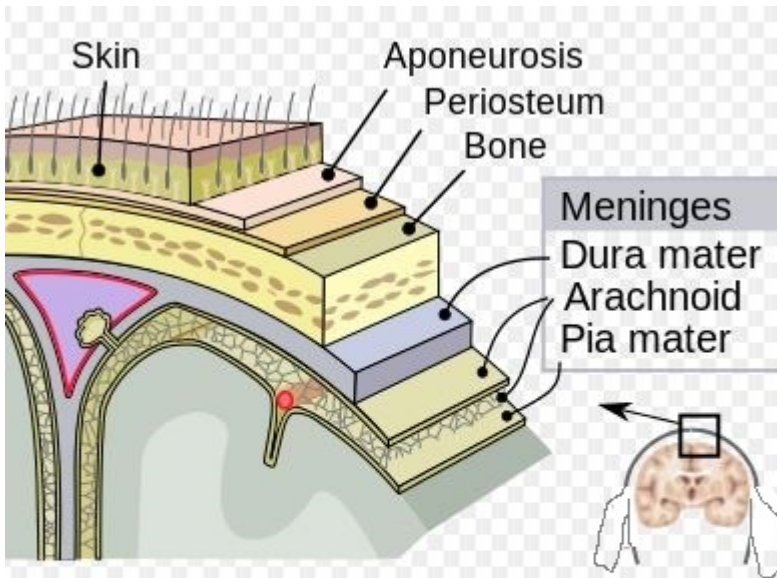
Tremor Syndrome - Not Just a Little White Dog Problem

Imagine having a condition that causes your head or entire body to shake uncontrollably. That's what happens in some of our dog friends. This problem called tremor syndrome is not uncommon, so I wanted to dedicate some time to explaining the condition. I hope you find the information interesting and shareworthy. Happy reading!



Tremor Syndrome - What is it?

The brain and the spinal cord are enclosed by a tri-layer of membranes called the meninges. The three layers of the meninges are the dura mater, arachnoid, and pia mater. The meninges may become inflamed for a variety of reasons. When this happens, one possible result is tremors affecting the head or the entire body.



I am Your Dog's Meninges

Illustration showing the three (3) layers of the meninges. Image courtesy of Daily Dog Discoveries.

Tremor syndrome may affect any breed of dog. Most commonly, however, tremor syndrome affects small breed dogs with white coats, including Malteses, West Highland white terriers, and poodles. For this reason, tremor syndrome is often called “little white shaker syndrome.” To date, veterinarians do not fully understand what triggers inflammation of the meninges (called meningitis), but an immune-mediated etiology is strongly suspected.

Tremor Syndrome - What does it look like?

Dogs living with tremor syndrome often look like they’re shivering. The tremors are often described as fine shaking movements of the head or entire body. While absent when a dog is sleeping, tremors are often exacerbated with excitement. Other neurologic signs, including abnormal eye movements and seizures, may be seen but are considered rare.

Tremor Syndrome - How is it diagnosed?

A veterinarian will obtain a complete patient history and perform a thorough physical examination. There are a variety of conditions that may cause tremors. Indeed, tremor syndrome is a diagnosis of exclusion. Thus, an appropriate diagnostic investigation is warranted. Recommended testing may include:

- Complete blood count - to evaluate red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets
- Biochemical profile - to evaluate the function of the kidneys and liver, as well to measure electrolytes
- Urinalysis - to evaluate kidney function and screen for inflammation/infection in the urinary tract
- Infectious disease screening - to look for infectious organisms that may be affecting the central nervous system
- Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) - to look for structural changes in the brain that can produce similar clinical signs
- Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) analysis - to look for inflammation and infection in the central nervous system

Pet parents will likely find it helpful to partner with a board-certified veterinary neurologist to develop a logical and cost-effective diagnostic plan.

Tremor Syndrome - How is it treated?

The mainstay intervention for tremor syndrome is administration of a corticosteroid. This class of medication provides anti-inflammatory and immune system modulatory benefits. Most patients positively respond to therapy within a few days to a few weeks. Once clinical signs have been absent for at least one month, a veterinarian will recommend a regime for slowly weaning the corticosteroid. Thankfully, the prognosis is generally good. However, clinical signs can return with weaning and discontinuation of corticosteroids in some dogs. Thus, some patients need lifelong therapy.

The take-away message about tremor syndrome in dogs...

Head or whole-body tremors in dogs can result from inflammation of the meninges - this constellation of clinical signs is called tremor syndrome. A thorough diagnostic investigation is needed to rule out other potential causes of a dog's clinical signs. While corticosteroid therapy, tremors resolve in a majority of patients who go on to have high quality lives.

To find a board-certified veterinary neurologist, please visit the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine.

Wishing you wet-nosed kisses,

CriticalCareDVM

