

Hyperthyroid Disease in Cats

Hyperthyroidism is the most common hormonal disease seen in cats. The thyroid gland is located in the neck and disease is seen due to an increased secretion of thyroid hormone.

What are the symptoms of hyperthyroidism?

This disease is almost always seen in cats over the age of eight. Symptoms you may see at home include;

- Weight loss despite an increased appetite
- Hyperactivity, increased vocalisation and restlessness
- Increased thirst and urination
- Occasional vomiting and diarrhoea
- Matted, greasy, unkept coat.

On examination by your veterinarian increased heart rate and a murmur may be detected, and sometimes the thyroid gland can be palpated if enlarged. Once the disease is suspected, the diagnosis can be confirmed by a blood test.

How can hyperthyroidism be treated?

There are several therapeutic options that can be used in your pet – this will depend on a large number of factors which your vet will discuss with you.

- Anti-thyroid drug therapy

This involves using a tablet form of medication which interferes with the production and secretion of the thyroid hormone, thus it is a control and not a cure. It is quite economical to use and any side effects are often transient and mild.

- Surgical removal of the thyroid gland

This treatment has the distinct advantage that removal of the gland is a cure. It does mean that the pet needs to go under anaesthetic and if he/she has concurrent kidney or heart disease this can be risky. Therefore many patients are treated with the oral medication prior to surgery. Side effects post operatively can be nerve damage and removing the parathyroid gland (which controls calcium levels), as it sits very closely to the thyroid gland.

- Radioactive iodine therapy

Radioactive iodine is administered orally and is concentrated in the tissues of the thyroid gland. It destroys abnormal thyroid tissue while preserving normal thyroid tissue. Its primary advantage is that it is generally curative with no side effects. Disadvantages are that the cat requires 1-2 weeks in hospital post administration and it is a one off high expense of about \$900. The treatment cannot be used in patients that have concurrent disease ie kidney disease.

If you suspect that your cat is suffering from this disease, please free to make a time to discuss this with your veterinarian.