

TREATMENT

There are currently four treatment options for cats with hyperthyroidism:

- 1. Medical treatment**- Anti-thyroid drugs can be given daily to reduce the production and release of thyroid hormone from the thyroid gland. These can be used long term for the rest of your cat's life, or short term to control the signs of thyroid disease to reduce the risk of complications before surgical or radioactive treatment (see below). If tablets are used to treat your cat, your veterinary surgeon may ask you to come in for regular check-ups to monitor the response to treatment, adjust the dose if needed and identify any other problems.
- 2. Surgical thyroidectomy** – An operation can be performed to remove the diseased thyroid gland. This can lead to a permanent cure, however may not be effective if there is additional thyroid tissue elsewhere in the body. There are some risks involved with the anaesthetic and surgery which your veterinary surgeon will discuss with you.
- 3. Radioactive iodine therapy** - This has the advantage of a potential cure, does not require an anaesthetic and can treat cats with thyroid tissue which is not situated in the normal position in the neck. A single injection is required, however a treated cat will remain radioactive for a period of time following the injection and must therefore be hospitalised in special licensed facilities for several weeks following treatment.
- 4 Iodine restricted prescription diet** – This is available and may be suitable for some cases. No other food, titbits or treats can be fed as this will negate the beneficial effect of the diet

Summary

For most cats diagnosed with hyperthyroid disease the condition can be managed to allow them a good quality of life for potentially several years.

The treatment option chosen will depend on factors such as how well your pet will tolerate tablets, whether they have any other diseases that might increase the risk of surgery or how well they would tolerate being away from you for several weeks.

Please discuss any concerns you have with your veterinary surgeon so that a treatment plan can be arranged to suit both you and your pet.



XLVets Small Animal member veterinary practices work together to share experience, knowledge and ideas to ensure the highest levels of quality and care for their client's pets. XLVet member practices provide a compassionate and caring service for all pets and at the same time offer comprehensive and up-to-date treatment in all fields of veterinary medicine and surgery.

HYPERTHYROIDISM IN CATS (OVERACTIVE THYROID)



Hyperthyroidism is a condition frequently seen in middle aged and older cats. It is caused by an excessive production of thyroid hormones from the thyroid gland in the neck (or occasionally thyroid tissue found elsewhere in the body). Thyroid hormone regulates the metabolism so an overproduction of hormone increases metabolic rate and can have effects on all the body's major organ systems

How to recognise the signs

Signs of hyperthyroidism vary, as every cat has an individual response to the change in hormones. Typically cats will show weight loss despite a ravenous appetite.

Some cats develop an unkempt and scurfy coat. Diarrhoea and vomiting may occur. Many cats appear overactive or irritable. Overactive cats can appear to be younger than their years would suggest which can give owners a false impression that their cat is well.

Affected cats may drink more and wee more.

You may also notice that your pet has a bounding, rapid heartbeat, your vet may also detect a heart murmur.

Occasionally affected cats will appear weak, lack energy and have a poor appetite.

These signs can also be signs of many other problems in older cats so it is important to tell your vet of any changes you notice so that all information can be gathered to correctly identify the cause.



Hyperthyroid cat

- Weight loss in older cats can be due to a range of conditions which your veterinary surgeon can diagnose following a full examination and further tests
- Many cats with hyperthyroidism can have a good quality of life for years following diagnosis and treatment. Only rarely is the enlarged thyroid gland cancerous
- Because affected cats often eat well it can be difficult for owners to notice that their cat is unwell until the condition is quite advanced
- In the same way that humans can develop a number of different conditions as they age, cats with hyperthyroidism may have other conditions that also require treatment
- A range of treatment options are available which can be discussed with your veterinary surgeon



DIAGNOSIS

If your veterinary surgeon suspects hyperthyroidism, a number of tests will be required to confirm the diagnosis and rule out other possible conditions. Do remember that as cats age they may develop more than one disease. These tests may include:

- Blood tests- looking at levels of thyroid hormones but also assessing the health of the other internal organs eg. the kidneys
- Urine sample- to assess the function of the kidneys and rule out other problems such as diabetes.
- Blood pressure measurement- many hyperthyroid cats have high blood pressure.
- Electrocardiogram (ECG) which provides an electrical tracing of heart activity
- Radiograph of the chest
- Heat Ultrasound scan (echocardiography)- some hyperthyroid cats can develop a thickening of the heart muscle caused cardiomyopathy



Taking a cats blood pressure