

Feline hyperthyroidism

Hyperthyroidism is the overproduction of hormones by the thyroid glands in the neck. This is often due to changes in one or both glands, they are normally benign but in a very small percentage of cases (<5%) they are caused by cancer. These changes cause the body become unable to regulate hormone levels effectively.

Hyperthyroidism is commonly diagnosed in older cats and when well managed on medication or after surgery they can continue to live happy healthy lives.

The thyroid glands aid in multiple bodily processes including regulation of body temperature, metabolism of fats and carbohydrates, weight gain and loss (when glands are working as they should), heart rate and cardiac output, growth, brain development in young animals (isn't often affected as is a condition seen in older cats), muscle tone and skin condition.

When there is an increase in this hormone production then the cat's often loose weight despite remaining ravenous. This often leads to undesirable food stealing at home and can be one of the first signs owners become aware of.

Clinical signs:

Hyperthyroidism signs are often quite clear. They may include any of the following:

- Increased appetite/drinking
- Increased urination
- Weight loss
- Scruffy coat
- Flaky/greasy skin
- Anxiety/irritable
- Restless
- Enlarged thyroid
- Vomiting
- high heart rate
- High blood pressure
- Muscle loss

Diagnosis:

Hyperthyroidism is predominantly diagnosed by carrying out blood testing and ultrasound imaging.

This is important as some other conditions symptoms may overlap.

Blood tests are needed to also indicate to the vet how best to move forward with medication and guide what doses to prescribe. A monitoring blood test will then be taken after 4 weeks of being medicated to evaluate how the patient is responding and if the condition is stabilising. Blood tests will need to be taken regularly to review medication.

Treatment – Varies and some have higher risk consideration to others. Options may include:

- ☐ Oral medication (liquid or tablet) ☐ Surgery ☐ Radioactive iodine treatment ☐ Feeding low iodine diets

These all have pros and cons which should be discussed with the veterinary surgeon. If left untreated it can result in severe weight loss and high blood pressure, which can cause to damage of your cat's eyes, kidneys, heart and in severe cases brain.



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