



Feline Hyperthyroidism

In brief:

- Hyperthyroidism is common in older cats.
- There are a range of signs of the disease.
- Accurate diagnosis is by blood testing.
- A number of treatment methods are effective.
- Treated cats live happier lives.

Hyperthyroidism is a relatively common disease of older cats. The condition is caused most frequently by a non cancerous growth (an adenoma) in the thyroid gland in the cat's neck. This results in an increase in production of the thyroid hormones T3 and T4. Thyroid hormones affect nearly all the organs in the body and therefore hyperthyroidism can produce a wide range of clinical signs.

Weight loss with a normal or increased appetite – This is the most common clinical sign. Some cats are continuously ravenous. Weight loss occurs as the thyroid hormones cause an increase in the metabolic rate or activity.

Increased Heart Rate - The increase in hormones also affect the heart making it beat faster and stronger than normal which overtime can lead to heart muscle changes that can lead to heart failure. Some cats seem to pant all the time.

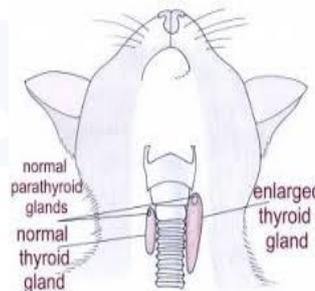


Behavioural changes - Affected cats will often show anxiety and behavioural changes with cats often being restless, excitable and may pace constantly. They may over-react to sudden noises or stresses (sometimes as simple as doors banging or dosing with a worm pill).

Gastrointestinal Signs – Vomiting, diarrhoea or an increase in the volume of faeces are common, often helped by their increased appetite.

Increased thirst and Urination from increased eating and drinking, and increased blood flow to the kidneys.

Dull, matted or greasy coat that looks rather unkempt. Claws may also grow longer and thicker. The return of the soft clean coat is one of the signs of successful treatment of the condition.



Diagnosis

A blood test is used to confirm the diagnosis of hyperthyroidism. Due to this disease affecting older cats, other complicating conditions may be diagnosed at the same time, so it is wise to do a general health screen at the same time.



A panting cat with hyperthyroidism.



Large elongated claws can be a sign.

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Treatment options:



Giving a cat medication can be easy and safe if you know how— we can show you how.

“Successful treatment of hyperthyroidism is so rewarding as you get your old loving happy cat back again”

Medication

Medication can be given to reduce the production and release of the thyroid hormones, but lifelong treatment is required. Some cats may experience side effects which include; vomiting, reduced appetite, fever, anaemia and lethargy. Treatment often needs to be given twice daily but is readily available and inexpensive. Routine blood tests should be done periodically during treatment to evaluate the effectiveness of therapy, and to monitor kidney function.

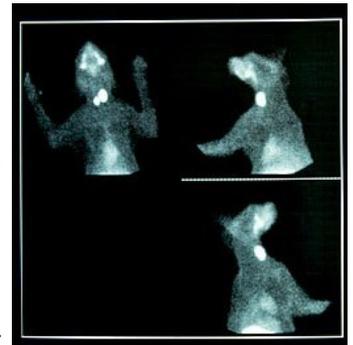


Surgery

Surgical removal of the thyroid gland is another treatment option which can provide a cure for the disease and eliminates the need for lifelong medication. Surgery requires general anaesthesia and there may be added risk in older cats with concurrent kidney or heart disease.

Radioactive-Iodine Therapy

This treatment is an injection of radioactive iodine into the cats vein. The thyroid gland quickly absorbs the iodine from the blood stream and the concentrated radiation destroys the abnormal thyroid tissue. It does not affect the normal tissue or any other organ. Hormone levels return to normal within 1-2 weeks of treatment but they do require hospitalization until radiation levels drop. This usually takes approx. two weeks. This treatment is conducted at a specialist facility in Brisbane.



Special images of a cat showing the thyroid glands taking up the radioactive iodine.



A gross lazy hypothyroid cat that needs extra thyroid hormones! No—your cat will not turn out like this!!

Hypothyroidism: an underactive thyroid.

A rare condition in cats occurs when the thyroid gland is less active and does not produce enough hormones. Affected cats are often lethargic, with reduced appetite but gain weight, and they often seek heat. Hypothyroidism can occur after surgery of radioactive-iodine therapy for the treatment of hyperthyroidism but this is rare. This condition is a lot more common in dogs. Treatment with low dose thyroid tablets is easy and returns the cat to a normal (lighter) active pet.