



FELINE HYPERTHYROIDISM

Hyperthyroid disease develops due to the overproduction of thyroid hormone by the thyroid gland. This can be due to a benign growth of the thyroid glands, or in rare cases due to thyroid gland cancer. The diagnosis of thyroid disease is via a blood test. If cancer of the gland is suspected (usually due to a large mass in the area of the thyroid gland), a biopsy of the gland is needed for a definitive diagnosis.

Excess thyroid hormone affects your cat's general metabolism. It can also have effects on your cat's heart, kidneys and gastro-intestinal system. Signs of thyroid disease include: increased appetite, weight loss, change in personality/ aggression, increased thirst, vomiting and diarrhoea and loss of sight (due to high blood pressure associated with the disease). **Without treatment, the side effects of hyperthyroidism will be progressive and your cat's condition will continue to worsen.**

There are 4 treatment options for hyperthyroidism:

Treatment should not be chosen on cost but on ease of use and administration in your unique situation as, unless radioactive iodine treatment is performed, this is a lifelong condition.

1. Anti-thyroid medication : This is the most common treatment option. It involves daily tablets or a gel on the ear for cats that are difficult to medicate. This is a lifelong treatment and requires regular blood tests to monitor the thyroid and kidneys. This treatment inhibits the production of thyroid hormone
2. I-131 Radioactive iodine treatment: A once-off radioactive injection which destroy the cells responsible for producing thyroid hormone. It is performed at another clinic and requires your cat to stay there for at least a week. Your cat needs to be stabilized with medication beforehand and it is not recommended if you cat has concurrent kidney disease. This has a higher initial capital outlay but is a lot more cost effective in the long term.

3. Hills y/d food (dry and wet forms): this food has shown great results in controlling the disease overseas. It needs to be fed as an exclusive diet and must not be given in conjunction with other thyroid medication. Cats receiving this food as treatment still require regular blood tests during stabilisation and then 6 monthly to ensure the disease is well controlled. Our experience is that it takes a bit longer than the medication to control the disease. It is no more cost effective but is a good option in cats that are difficult to medicate.
4. Surgical treatment : This involves removal of the thyroid gland. It is not commonly performed in New Zealand and is normally reserved for cats with one-sided thyroid disease, which is rare.

Your cat will require regular check-ups and blood tests initially until your cat's thyroid hormone is well controlled. This is usually followed by six monthly blood tests, blood pressure and urine checks.

Monitoring of Hyperthyroid cats:

1. Blood pressure: Hypertension (high blood pressure) is a common side effect of Hyperthyroidism. If the blood pressure does not come down to normal once the thyroid hormone is normal, your cat may need blood pressure medication as well.
2. Kidneys: Uncontrolled Hyperthyroidism can mask kidney disease. Once the thyroid hormone is under control, kidney disease can become apparent. It is important to monitor the kidneys at each blood check. A urine test is also necessary as part of the assessment of kidney function.
3. Thyroid hormone: The thyroid hormone is easily checked at the laboratory. This should be assessed every few weeks to months depending on your cat's clinical status.
4. Full bloods: Once diagnosed, your cat will require regular check-ups and blood tests until their thyroid hormone is under controlled. At these veterinary rechecks, your pet is examined, weighed and blood tests for thyroid and kidney function are performed. Once the thyroid is under control, we need to examine your cat once every 6 months in order to continue to prescribe the medication. In addition to this examination, we recommend that the thyroid, kidneys and blood pressure be checked every 6 months (approximately \$300). Once a year we recommend a full blood check looking at all the organs (approximately \$450).

Your next appointment is due: