



Hyperthyroidism advice sheet

Your pet has been diagnosed with hyperthyroidism. In this condition, excess thyroid hormone is secreted from the thyroid glands which has a number of effects on the body such as increased hunger and thirst, weight loss, increased vocalisation and behaviour changes. This is normally caused by a benign growth of one or both of the thyroid glands. The extra thyroid hormone puts an extra strain on various organs of the body such as the heart, and can cause vomiting or diarrhoea. We diagnose hyperthyroidism by a blood test measuring thyroid hormone levels in the blood. There are many options available in the management of hyperthyroidism.

1-Long term medication

There are two forms of medication available for the treatment of hyperthyroidism. For either of these drugs, the medication needs to be given for life and your cat would need to take them every day. They are called felimazole (given twice daily) and vidalta (given once daily), both available in different strength tablets depending on the patient's needs.

Once medication has been started, follow up checks will be needed to check for possible side effects, and to check the dose is right for your cat. A blood test will be required to check thyroid hormone levels, along with how your pet's internal organs are coping with the medication. The first check is normally 3-4 weeks after starting medication, and once stable, your cat will require checks every 3-6 months. Please remember that it is important that they do not miss any tablets, particularly in the 9 days leading up to checks, as it would make it difficult to interpret results. Your pet will also require periodic blood pressure checks as high blood pressure is a common condition to develop in cats with hyperthyroidism

Adverse reactions seen with felimazole or vidalta include:

- Vomiting or diarrhoea
- Decreased appetite/anorexia
- Severe pruritus (itching) and excoriations (grazes) of the head and neck
- Jaundice (yellow gums)

If your cat has any of these signs please stop giving the tablets and contact the practice as soon as possible.

Precautions you should take:

- Keep tablets out of the reach of children
- Wash hands after handling tablets or litter used by treated animals
- Do not eat, drink or smoke while handling the tablets or used litter. If accidentally ingested, seek medical advice and show the package insert or label to your doctor
- Do not handle this product if you are allergic to hyperthyroidism inhibitors
- **Do not break or crush tablets**
- **These drugs are suspected human teratogens, women of child-bearing age should wear gloves when handling the tablets, litter or vomit of treated cats.**

Key points for medical treatment.

Treatment is for life, don't stop giving the tablets even if your cat appears better.

Read the adverse reactions and precautions carefully

Your pet will need regular check ups and blood tests, these are very important for their health and shouldn't be missed.

Please call the practice for advice if you have any concerns.

2-Surgical treatment

Surgical treatment involves surgically removing the thyroid gland that is producing excess thyroid hormone. Usually this is the larger of the two glands.

Before surgery, your cat will need tablets to control their thyroid hormone levels and hence reduce the surgical risks, particularly to the heart. Please read the above section on medical treatment. Surgery to remove your cat's thyroid gland will only be appropriate once higher thyroid levels are controlled. This will be monitored by blood tests and your vet will advise you of the best time to proceed with surgery.

Surgical risks and complications.

- Two other glands called the parathyroid glands are situated next to the thyroid glands. The parathyroid glands are involved with calcium control. These glands are very small and sometimes are very difficult to see, and often share important blood vessels with the thyroid gland. They, or their blood supply, may be removed or damaged during surgery if we are unable to visualise them at the time of surgery. This is particular concern if it is the second thyroid gland that is being removed, and could result in a stay at the practice to measure calcium levels, and ultimately to long term supplementation of calcium.
- Bleeding at the site of surgery can occur, this is rare
- Damage to the nerve that supplies the larynx can cause paralysis of the larynx and voice change. This is rare

After surgery your pet would not need further treatment for her thyroid condition unless the other thyroid gland becomes affected, which is a consideration as a number of cats will develop the condition again in the future. If this occurs your vet will discuss the most appropriate treatment options with you.

3-Radioactive iodine.

Radioactive iodine treatment works by selectively destroying overactive thyroid tissue. This is a very specialist treatment and only a few animal hospitals in the UK are able to provide this treatment. The nearest facility to us is at the Royal Veterinary College in Potters Bar. There is often a 2-3 month waiting list for the treatment to start. Due to the radioactive risks to humans and other animals your cat would have to stay at the specialist hospital for approximately 4 weeks. You won't be able to visit them during this time. However, once their stay in hospital is over no further treatment is needed. Please discuss this option further with your vet.



4-Diet

There is now a diet available that can be used to manage hyperthyroidism. This is produced by the company Hills, and is called Y/D. By the diet being completely lacking in iodine, thyroid hormone cannot be produced as dietary iodine is an essential component for the body to produce thyroid hormone. This diet is appropriate for indoor cats that can be fed an exclusive diet. If your cat goes outside, even small amounts of supplementation, be it from hunting or even eating grass or vegetative matter, can reduce the likelihood of food being an effective treatment for hyperthyroidism.