

Hyperthyroidism

What is it?

Hyperthyroidism is an overproduction of thyroid hormone from the thyroid gland. The over-production is due to a tumour in the gland but, this is almost always a benign tumour.

Hyperthyroidism is most prevalent in cats aged 10 years or above but, can be seen in cats as young as 3 years old.

What are the signs of hyperthyroidism?

- Increase in appetite and food intake
- Weight loss despite this increase in appetite
- Increased drinking
- Diarrhoea
- Restlessness
- Poor hair coat

How is it diagnosed?

Hyperthyroidism is diagnosed by a simple blood test to measure Thyroxine (T4) levels in the blood.

Hyperthyroidism can often cause high blood pressure. This may be measured in your cat. Left un-treated, high blood pressure secondary to hyperthyroidism can cause detached retinas and blindness in cats. Since the disease is most common in older cats, concurrent kidney disease is common. Performing blood tests and urine analysis to assess the kidneys is crucial.



How's it treated?

Once confirmed by a blood test, there are various treatments available including:

By far the most common method is to give medication by mouth twice daily. This can either be in the form of tablets or a liquid. This medication will be given for the remainder of your cat's life. Regular blood tests are used to ensure the correct dose is being given to your cat, as the dose requirements will often change.

Diet – there is a dietary option for the treatment of hyperthyroidism. However, it must be the only food given to your cat, so is not appropriate for cats that venture outside.

Surgery to remove the thyroid gland – this can cure the problem but, sometimes, reoccurrence is possible. For anaesthetic safety, treatment with oral medication is required first to get the thyroid hormone level back to normal.

Radioactive Iodine – This involves a radioactive injection given to your cat which then destroys the thyroid gland. This can cure the problem and associated with fewer complications.

However, it does involve a stay away from home for your cat (while its radioactivity levels go down!). This treatment is not available at Lime Trees so would require your cat to be referred to a different veterinary practice.

What does this mean for my cat?

Surgical removal of the gland and radioactive iodine treatment can both lead to a cure. However, even if the decision is made to use life-long medication, the outlook for a hyperthyroid cat is good. Regular monitoring of the thyroid hormone level, blood pressure and kidney function regularly is necessary.



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If you are worried about your cat's health, or want to discuss treatment options, give us a call to make an appointment.