

Vets Park

for the pets in your life - your vet for life

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Hyperthyroidism

Your cat has been diagnosed with hyperthyroidism. This means that the thyroid gland is producing excessive amounts of thyroid hormones causing a dramatic increase in the body's metabolic rate.

The thyroid gland is located in the neck and is composed of 2 parts called lobes which lie on either side of the windpipe.

Management of cats with hyperthyroidism requires both financial and emotional commitment from you the owner. It is vital that we work as a team. You play an important role in ensuring your cat receives the prescribed diet food and medication.

Treating Cats with Hyperthyroidism

Hyperthyroidism can be treated very successfully in most cats. Treatment initially involves bringing the levels of thyroid hormones in the blood back to normal. This requires either daily medication or feeding your cat a special diet called Prescription Diet Feline y/d daily. If you choose to give the tablets they must be given whole and should not be crushed. You should wash your hands after handling them.

After the initial stabilisation period, which usually lasts around 3 weeks we recommend repeat blood samples to check both thyroid levels and liver and kidney function.

Once your cat is stable we then have three long-term treatment options:

1. Surgery to remove the affected gland (called a thyroidectomy) which in many cases cures the problem for good. Sometimes both lobes of the thyroid gland are enlarged and so both require removal.
2. Long-term medication with tablets. This will not cure hyperthyroidism and so your cat will need to be treated with daily medication for life. We will also need to check the response to therapy with 6, 10 and 20 week blood tests. After this we will require a minimum of one health check and blood test every 3- 6 months.

3. Radioactive iodine therapy is a safe and effective cure for hyperthyroidism. It is administered as single injection under the skin. It does not require a general anaesthetic but it does require an injection of a radioactive substance. This means the cat must be hospitalised for 3-6 weeks at a licensed treatment centre. Locally we refer cats to Bristol Veterinary School, Langford.

Written estimates can be given for each test or treatment that may be needed.

Surgery

Most cats that are diagnosed with hyperthyroidism are senior. We understand you may be concerned about the prospect of surgery. Our experience tells us that the majority of cats who have good kidney function prior to surgery do very well. All cats undergoing thyroidectomy will receive intravenous fluids during anaesthesia.

Most cases are treated as day cases and will go home the same day as their surgery.

If your cat needs both thyroid lobes removing or if your cat has had a previous thyroidectomy then we will keep your cat in overnight to monitor appetite and blood calcium levels, as hypocalcaemia (a low level of calcium in the blood) is a potential complication of a bilateral thyroidectomy.

Our approach is the gold standard for the diagnosis, treatment and monitoring of cats with hyperthyroidism. We understand that some of these procedures may be difficult for individual clients to afford. If this is the case please feel free to discuss this with the veterinary surgeon so we can work together to tailor a bespoke programme for your cat.

There is a large amount of information available on the internet about hyperthyroidism. Not all of it is accurate. We are happy with the quality of the information on the following websites:

www.icatcare.org/advice-centre/cat-health/hyperthyroidism

www.cat-hyperthyroidism.co.uk