



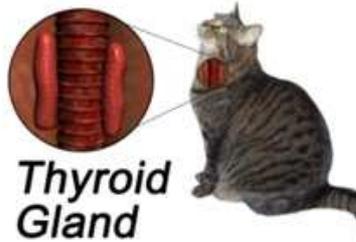
# FACTSHEET

## Hyperthyroidism

*Hyperthyroidism, also referred to as an overactive thyroid, is a disorder commonly seen in elderly cats. It arises as a result of excessive production and secretion of thyroid hormone from the thyroid gland.*

### Where is the thyroid gland? What do thyroid hormones do?

The thyroid gland is located within the neck on either side of the windpipe. It is responsible for the production and secretion of the thyroid hormones; T4 and T3 (AKA Thyroxine). These hormones have an important role in regulating metabolic rate- the rate at which the body burns energy. It also has generalised effects on growth, maturation and has an effect on the heart and blood vessels within the body.



### Could your pet have hyperthyroidism?

Hyperthyroidism is frequently seen in cats. This is in contrast to dogs where hypothyroidism, a reduction in thyroid hormone is more commonly recognised. Hyperthyroidism is the most common endocrine (hormone-related) disease to affect cats older than 8 years of age. It can be seen in cats ranging from 4-20 years, however fewer than 5% of cats with hyperthyroidism are younger than the age of 8.

The classical signs of hyperthyroidism are listed in the table below. Because of the multi-systemic effects of the disease and the variable clinical signs, hyperthyroidism should be suspected in any mature to elderly cat with a medical complaint. The most common clinical signs are those highlighted with an \* in the table.

Clinical signs of Hyperthyroidism in Cats
<b>Weight loss*</b>
<b>Polyphagia (excessive eating or appetite)*</b>
<b>Unkempt haircoat, patchy alopecia (hair loss)*</b>
<b>Polyuria/polydipsia (excessive urinating/drinking)*</b>
<b>Vomiting*</b>
<b>Nervous, hyperactive</b>
<b>Diarrhoea, bulky stools</b>
<b>Decreased appetite</b>
<b>Tremor</b>
<b>Weakness</b>
<b>Difficulty breathing</b>
<b>Decreased activity, lethargy</b>
<b>Anorexia (loss of appetite)</b>

### **How will your vet diagnose hyperthyroidism?**

Physical examination of your cat may reveal an enlarged thyroid gland; approximately 90% of cats with hyperthyroidism have thyroid glands which can be felt by your vet. Your vet may note cardiovascular abnormalities such as tachycardia (an increased heart rate) and heart murmurs, both of which are complications that can arise as a result of excess thyroid hormone. Your cat's general behaviour may also signify the likelihood of hyperthyroidism; hyperactivity and a cat being difficult to examine are most commonly recognised but aggression, weakness and fatigue can also indicate the disease.

If hyperthyroidism is suspected, it is likely that blood tests will be recommended. These will include a full blood test to check your pet's general organ function as well as the T4 test which is design to check the amount of thyroid hormone in the blood. This is usually a day procedure and your cat will be admitted in the morning and ready to go home in the afternoon.

If your cat is diagnosed with hyperthyroidism, there are a number of different treatment options.

### **Treating your hyperthyroid Cat:**

Hyperthyroidism can be managed through medication, diet and surgery. Methimazole is a drug used as a long-term treatment of feline hyperthyroidism. It can be given as a tablet (these tablets are called felimazole) or it can be applied to the cat's ear in a gel form which is absorbed through the skin; this option is especially useful in cats that are difficult to tablet. Some additional drugs may be offered to your cat reduce its heart rate if needs be.

Changing your cat's diet is another option for hyperthyroid treatment; your vets may offer a prescription diet. At Westover we offer a Hills prescription diet specific for hyperthyroid cats. It is clinically proven to manage thyroid health and is useful because it has reduced levels of iodine in comparison to other feeds, this helps to reduce the production of thyroid hormone and thus the disease itself.

Surgical removal of the thyroid gland (thyroidectomy) is another possibility when medication and diet alterations do not seem to work. These can be performed here at Westover.

Treatment options are customised for the individual animal; discussions with your vet will ensure your animal is on the most suitable treatment to help manage hyperthyroidism.

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