

Hyperthyroidism

Hyperthyroidism is a disease which is common in older cats. It is the secretion of excess thyroid hormones than normal by the thyroid gland and is usually due to a tumor of the thyroid gland.

What signs may be seen with hyperthyroidism?

- Weight loss even though the cat will seem to have a larger appetite
- Poor hair coat
- Increased urination and drinking
- Intolerance to stress
- Aggression
- Panting
- Swollen neck
- Some cats are lethargic while others become hyperactive

Hyperthyroidism can cause secondary problems such as cardiomyopathies, kidney disease, high blood pressure and urinary tract infections if left untreated.

Treatment for hyperthyroidism

The aim of treatment is to keep thyroid hormone concentrations in the lower half of the normal range. Options for treatment are referral surgery to physically remove the affected thyroid tissue, antithyroid medications or radiation treatment. All three of these options are very effective.

Anti-thyroid drugs are the cheapest option and are always used before the surgical options also, to attempt to stabilise the patient. They inhibit the synthesis of thyroid hormone by blocking the binding of iodine into the other precursors of thyroid hormones.

The antithyroid drug we will use. = Carbimazole

The recommended starting dose is 2.5mg twice a day for 2 weeks. After this time the kidneys and blood levels of the drug should be checked to make sure the dose is working and adjust it accordingly.

Are there any bad side effects of the drug?

- the drug can have a toxic effect on the liver. This is very uncommon (less than 2% of cases)
- some cats can become lethargic and inappetent and vomit however this usually will stop without needing to stop the treatment.
- it is important to note that hyperthyroidism can cause kidney problems but at the same time mask the signs of these problems. Because of this, sometimes cats with hyperthyroidism have also got kidney disease which is not noticed until the hyperthyroidism is treated. Because of this, the kidneys should be monitored to assess how they respond to the antithyroid drugs and adjust the drug dose as required to allow optimum kidney function whilst treating the hyperthyroidism.

The prognosis is excellent for most cats with hyperthyroidism, as long as other potential diseases (such as kidney disease) can be managed, the treatment is monitored well and the owner is compliant with medicating twice daily.