

Hyperthyroid Disease

Hyperthyroidism occurs when there is an overproduction of the thyroid hormone. This is a common and very treatable disease in older cats. The average age is 12-13 and can be easily diagnosed with a simple blood test.

Several signs of this disease are excessive drinking and large amount of urine being produced. Also weight loss is noted even though your cat may have a ravenous appetite and eat more than normal. Some cats will vomit or have diarrhea. Increased vocalization and a restless behavior can be seen. On physical exam the enlarged thyroid glands might be felt; an abnormal heart rhythm or murmur may be present.

Thyroid glands are located on the neck along the trachea. They produce a hormone that regulates the body's metabolism. The gland becomes enlarged, and is rarely a malignant growth. With hyperthyroid disease, excess hormones are released which causes an increased metabolic rate.

Diagnosis is made through a simple blood test. There are three methods of treatment.

Oral medication, methimazole, is the preferred method as it is inexpensive and allows for easy adjustment of dosages. This can be in the form of pills or liquid. Once or twice daily medication is required and it is a life-long treatment. A transdermal gel is also available, but this is not always an effective form of treatment.

Surgery and radio-iodine therapy are two other methods and should be discussed with us.

Several problems associated with hyperthyroidism include heart disease, high blood pressure, and ocular problems. Occasionally kidney disease is recognized when hyperthyroidism is treated. It is not caused by the disease or treatment. It was previously present, but only discovered with treatment.

