

## **Hyperthyroidism in Cats**

**There are some diseases which have symptoms that mimic several other diseases. One of these diseases affects my feline patients.**

**This disease syndrome affects middle-aged and older cats, and the symptoms may be subtle at first but then progresses to affect many organ systems and have a very profound affect on the health and welfare of cats.**

**The first sign a feline pet might exhibit is increased appetite and weight loss. You might notice increased thirst and urination, vomiting, diarrhea and a pet that is becoming unusually over-active. The haircoat can be affected with a thinning or greasy appearance.**

**As you can see, there is not one single symptom listed above that is not present in other diseases that affect cats. Fortunately, the disease which I will be discussing this week is easily diagnosed by a blood test. This clinical entity is called hyperthyroidism.**

**Hyperthyroidism is usually caused by an enlargement of the Thyroid glands in the cats neck that is the result of a non-cancerous tumor called an adenoma. On rare occasions, a malignant tumor is responsible.**

**The enlargement of the Thyroid gland increases the production of thyroid hormones which then affects many other organs in the body. One of the changes that occur with the disease is a faster heart rate. With this, the heart wall thickens and can cause an enlargement of the heart which compromises heart function which can lead to heart failure. Additionally, high blood pressure is another potential complication of the disease and can cause damage to the eyes, brain, kidneys and the heart itself.**

**Fortunately, hyperthyroidism is relatively easy to diagnose. On physical examination, your veterinarian will check for**

**an enlarged thyroid gland and perform routine blood chemistries. In addition, he will check the levels of thyroid hormone, and if they are elevated he will recommend a treatment regimen which will depend on several factors such as kidney and heart function, the age of the patient and the desires of the pet owner.**

**The three ways to treat this disease consist of a medication, surgery or radioactive-iodine therapy. Each course of action has its advantages and disadvantages.**

**The advantage of medication is that it is readily available and inexpensive. The anti-thyroid drugs reduce the production and release of thyroid hormone from the thyroid gland. Like all drugs, there is a possibility for side affects and this treatment controls the disease but does not cure it. Lifelong, twice daily administration of a tablet is required.**

**Surgery is another option which will be discussed by your veterinarian. It comes with certain risks and entails a greater expense, however, it can be curative and eliminate the need for lifelong therapy.**

**Radioactive-iodine therapy has the advantage of being curative for up to 95 percent of patients with fewer chances of side affects. The disadvantages include several weeks of hospitalization and greatly increased expense.**

**In my practice, I see this disease frequently. It is profound because it affects many different organ systems. If diagnosed early, it can be successfully treated and many of the symptoms eliminated. Damage to other organ symptoms can be halted or reversed.**

**If you see any of the symptoms listed above, ask your veterinary health care professional about the possibility of this disease.**

**For more information about hyperthyroidism in cats, visit my website, [www.manchestervet.com](http://www.manchestervet.com) and click on the “encyclopedia” tab.**