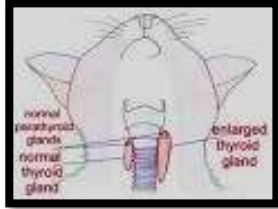


Hyperthyroidism

Our feline friends are living longer these days and as they age they become more prone to diseases such as hyperthyroidism. We tend to see cats develop this disease when they are



between 8 and 12 years of age. Hyperthyroidism is a disease where, in the majority of cats (97%), a benign tumor of the thyroid gland causes the gland to start overproducing thyroid hormone.

As in humans one of the functions of the thyroid gland is metabolism control so when the gland starts overproducing hormones the cats' metabolism will increase leading to weight loss. The weight loss is gradual and can go un-noticed for some time.

Other signs of hyperthyroidism include:

- ✓ An older cat that stays active or becomes more active
- ✓ A cat that is eating and drinking well but still seems to be a little thin
- ✓ Changes in the texture or health of their hair coat
- ✓ Nausea and/or vomiting
- ✓ A cat that may or may not have diarrhea

What your veterinarian may find while doing a physical exam on your pet:

- ✓ An elevated heart rate
- ✓ A heart murmur
- ✓ Signs of hypertension in the form of retinal hemorrhages
- ✓ An enlarged easily palpated thyroid gland

Your Veterinarian will want to do bloodwork that includes a T4 level. Elevated T4 levels indicate that your cat has hyperthyroidism.

There are a few different options for treating hyperthyroidism. The most common option is treating your cat with a medication called methimazole. This pill is given either once or twice daily depending on the severity of the hyperthyroidism in your cat. If your cat willingly takes pills this treatment option typically allows for easy control of the disease. There are however a small number of cats that have adverse reactions to the medication, eliminating the pills as an option. Another therapy is feeding your cat a food called Science Diet Y/D that has a very low iodine level in it which minimizes the amount of thyroid hormone produced. The cat cannot eat any other food, treats or table scraps of any kind. The drawback to this treatment option is that it can be difficult to feed this diet to just one cat in a multi-cat household. A third option is to have the thyroid gland surgically removed which would eliminate the benign tumor that is producing the abnormally high hormone levels. The only drawback to this option is that you will need to supplement the cats' diet with some thyroid hormone and maybe even some calcium. Another treatment option would be to go to a specialty clinic for a treatment with

radioactive iodine. The main goal of this treatment is to target the abnormal cells while leaving the healthy cells untouched to continue to produce normal levels of the thyroid hormone. Regardless of the type of treatment chosen routine bloodwork is necessary to ensure that their T4 levels are maintaining in a normal range.

If hyperthyroidism goes untreated predictable physiological changes will occur in the cat. They will continue to lose weight and body conditioning due to the destruction of healthy muscle tissue. The elevated T4 levels may cause chronic diarrhea as well vomiting. Their heart can suffer from long term hypertension and increased heart rate. Hypertension can also cause sudden blindness because of retinal hemorrhage and detachment.

Since older cats are more prone to becoming hyperthyroid we sometime uncover other impaired organ systems during the course of treatment. Chronic kidney insufficiency is commonly found in the aging cat. Toxin clearance by the kidney is dependent on blood flow and pressure through the kidneys. It is common to find that once the thyroid is back under control and hypertension has been resolved that the blood tests reveal kidney insufficiency. If this occurs, it is still better to treat the kidneys separate than allow the thyroid to be uncontrolled.

For more information feel free to call Cedar Grove Veterinary Services at 920-668-6212 or send us an email at info@cgvet.com.