

West Lakeland Veterinary Group

What is Feline Hyperthyroidism?

It is a hormonal problem generally occurring in elderly cats where the thyroid gland is overactive.

What symptoms will my cat show?

In the early stages cats can often seem extremely well and full of vigour however continuing disease can then lead to -

- *Significant weight loss despite ravenous appetite*
- *Increased thirst and urination*
- *Poor coat condition*
- *Tachycardia (fast heart rate)*
- *Goitre (swelling on the thyroid gland)*
- *Hypertension (high blood pressure)*
- *Heart condition (cardio-myopathy)*
- *Weakness (ataxia)*

How do you diagnosis hyperthyroidism?

If your vet is suspicious of hyperthyroidism from examining your cat a blood test will be taken to measure the level of thyroxin (t4 - thyroid hormone) in the blood stream. If the level is higher than normal then hyperthyroidism is confirmed

Can hyperthyroidism be treated?

There are many options for treatment/ control of this condition and you should talk to your vet about the advantages of different options .

- **Tablet medication** - *Probably the most commonly opted for option . It has the advantage of being effective in most cases however although requires daily medication and continual monitoring in the form of blood tests. Costs are manageable but ongoing.*
- **Dietary Management** - *There are veterinary diets which can control the condition. The main advantage is not having to medicate the cat daily. The cost of these diets can be an issue and it can be difficult to make sure it is exclusively fed particularly in cats who are hunting*
- **Surgical removal of the thyroid gland** - *Has the advantage of potentially curing the condition. Disadvantages include a significant risk of complication if other structures are inadvertently damaged close to the gland. Very often cats are in poor condition and at high risk of complication. Costs are initially significant but hopefully not ongoing in successful cases*
- **Radioactive therapy** - *This is considered to be the gold standard treatment for hyperthyroidism. It involves injecting the cat with a radioactive isotope in order to destroy part of the thyroid gland hence curing the condition whilst avoiding risky surgery or daily medications. The disadvantage is that your cat will likely have to spend a number weeks isolated in a hospital until they are deemed radioactively safe. There are not many centres offering this service so be prepared to travel and the cost tends to be significant.*

Should you be worried that your cat is suffering from hyperthyroidism please contact the surgery and make an appointment!