

Thyroid Disease in Cats and Dogs

Introduction

Thyroid disease is a common condition in both dogs and cats, though it affects them differently. The thyroid gland plays an essential role in regulating metabolism, and when it functions improperly, it can lead to a variety of health issues. Recognizing the symptoms early and seeking veterinary care can help manage the condition and improve your pet's quality of life.

What is Thyroid Disease?

The thyroid gland, located in the neck, is responsible for producing hormones that regulate metabolism. When the gland malfunctions, it can cause either **hypothyroidism** (underactive thyroid) or **hyperthyroidism** (overactive thyroid).

Thyroid Disease in Dogs vs. Cats

- **Dogs:** Most commonly develop **hypothyroidism**, where the thyroid produces too little hormone. This slows down metabolism and affects various body functions.
- **Cats:** Typically suffer from **hyperthyroidism**, where the thyroid produces too much hormone, leading to an overactive metabolism.

Symptoms to Watch For

Dogs (Hypothyroidism)

- Weight gain despite normal diet
- Lethargy or decreased activity
- Hair loss or thinning coat
- Dry or flaky skin
- Cold intolerance
- Slow heart rate

Cats (Hyperthyroidism)

- Weight loss despite increased appetite
- Hyperactivity or restlessness
- Increased thirst and urination
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Unkempt or matted coat
- Fast heart rate

What to Expect When You Suspect Thyroid Disease

If you suspect your pet has thyroid disease, we will begin by gathering important information about their overall health.

- We usually ask about diet, amount of food intake, and exercise levels.
- We will recommend bloodwork that includes a thyroid check.

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- If anything is off on that bloodwork, we might recommend a full thyroid panel.

Diagnostic Tests

To confirm thyroid disease, we may perform:

- **Total T4 (Thyroxine) Test** – Measures thyroid hormone levels.
- **Free T4 by Equilibrium Dialysis** – More specific for confirming thyroid disease.
- **TSH (Thyroid-Stimulating Hormone) Test** – Helps diagnose hypothyroidism in dogs.
- **Thyroid Panel** – A combination of tests for a complete evaluation.
- **Additional Tests** – Bloodwork, urinalysis, and blood pressure monitoring may be recommended.

Treatment Options

- **Dogs (Hypothyroidism)** – Treated with daily thyroid hormone replacement medication (levothyroxine).
- **Cats (Hyperthyroidism)** – Several treatment options are available, including:
 - **Medication (Methimazole)** – Manages hormone levels but requires lifelong treatment.
 - **Radioactive Iodine Therapy** – A potential cure that destroys overactive thyroid tissue.
 - **Prescription Diet (Low-Iodine Food)** – Restricts iodine intake to lower hormone production.


Ongoing Monitoring and Future Testing

Once diagnosed, routine follow-up tests help ensure treatment is working effectively:

- **Dogs:** Thyroid hormone levels should be monitored periodically with blood tests, typically every 6–12 months. **Thyroid level rechecks need to be done 4 to 6 hours post-pill.**
- **Cats:** Regular T4 testing, kidney function monitoring, and blood pressure checks are recommended to adjust treatment as needed.

If you suspect your pet has thyroid disease, early diagnosis and treatment can significantly improve their quality of life. Contact us at **Franktown Animal Clinic** to schedule an evaluation.

 **Franktown Animal Clinic**

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