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HYPERTHYROIDISM

Feline hyperthyroidism is a common endocrine disorder in cats, which is caused by an overactive thyroid gland. This gland, which is located in the neck, produces hormones that regulate metabolism and other bodily functions. When the thyroid gland produces too much hormone, cats can develop hyperthyroidism, which can lead to a range of symptoms and health problems.

The most common symptoms of hyperthyroidism in cats include:

- **Weight loss with increased appetite.**
- **Vomiting or GI upset.**
- **Restlessness/hyperactivity.**
- **Increased thirst and urination.**
- **Excessive vocalizing/howling.**
- **Heavy or rapid breathing.**

These symptoms can develop slowly over time, and may be mistaken for other health issues. so, it's important for pet owners to have their cat seen by a veterinarian when any symptom starts.

The exact cause of feline hyperthyroidism is not fully understood, but it is believed to be related to the aging process. The majority of cats diagnosed with hyperthyroidism are over 10 years old. Other risk factors for hyperthyroidism in cats include a diet high in iodine, exposure to environmental toxins, and certain genetic factors.

Fortunately, hyperthyroidism in cats can be treated with medication, surgery, or a combination of both. The most common treatment for hyperthyroidism in cats is a medication called **Methimazole**. This medication blocks the production of thyroid hormones, helping to alleviate the symptoms that come with an overactive thyroid. The medication is usually given orally, but it does also come in a *transdermal form* now, for those cats who are not so easy to give a pill to. If you choose to treat this with medication, your cat will need to take this medication once to twice daily for life.

While it may take a few months to dial in the correct dose for your cat, once we do, you will only need to **bring them in annually for an exam and lab work**. Over time, their symptoms should improve, their appetite should return to normal, they should start to gain some weight, and if they were hyperactive, they should begin to mellow out.

In some cases, *surgery or Radioiodine treatment* may be recommended. Surgery involves removing the thyroid gland and is usually recommended in cases where medication is not effective or where there are other concerns that make treating with medication difficult. Surgery is curative, and would prevent the need for medication, but does come with its own set of complications.

Radioiodine treatment involves the use of radioactive iodine to selectively destroy the overactive thyroid tissue, while leaving the normal thyroid tissue intact. Ask your veterinarian for more information if you're interested in these alternative therapy options.

In conclusion, Hyperthyroidism can definitely make any cat feel unwell, or act differently, but there are options to make sure they have a happy and healthy life. It's important to monitor your cat's symptoms, keep up with annual exams & lab work, and to communicate regularly with your veterinarian about any changes or concerns.