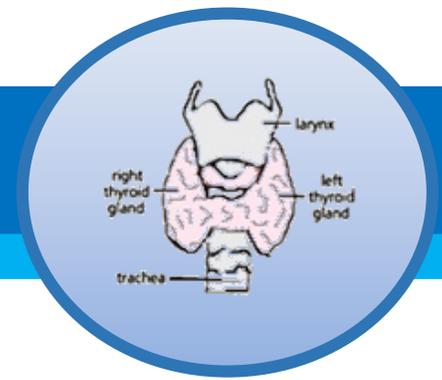


Hypothyroidism



What is Hypothyroidism?

Hypothyroidism is common in dogs, but rare in cats. The thyroid gland, which is located in the neck, has a large role in regulating metabolism, through thyroid hormone.

What causes Hypothyroidism?

Hypothyroidism is a condition where the thyroid gland is not producing enough thyroid hormone. The thyroid gland is regulated by the pituitary gland, which is located at the base of the brain. The pituitary gland releases TSH, which tells the thyroid gland to produce thyroid hormone. TSH production depends on the amount of thyroid hormone in the blood. The more thyroid hormone present, the less TSH that is produced. Most cases of hypothyroidism are caused by destruction of the thyroid gland by your dog's own immune system. Cancer may also be a cause of hypothyroidism, although rare.

Is my dog at risk?

Hypothyroidism occurs most commonly in spayed female, middle-aged dogs between the ages of 4 to 10 years, and more often in larger breed dogs. Breeds at risk include Golden Retrievers, Doberman Pinschers, Miniature Schnauzers, Cocker Spaniels. Mixed breed dogs tend to be at lower risk.

What are the symptoms of Hypothyroidism in my dog?

Because of the thyroid's role in metabolism, a lack of thyroid production affects the metabolic function of all organ systems. Therefore, symptoms are usually non-specific and may include weight gain, lack of energy, poor hair coat/excessive shedding, skin hyperpigmentation, cold intolerance, bradycardia, hypercholesterolemia, and sometimes anemia.

How do we diagnose hypothyroidism?

Hypothyroidism is diagnosed with a simple blood test. The blood test can be run in our in-house laboratory at Glanbrook Veterinary Services. We check your dog's blood for T₄. T₄ is produced ONLY in the thyroid gland.

As well, once a low T₄ is confirmed, a TSH level may be needed to confirm the diagnosis. A hypothyroid dog will have a high TSH level.

How is Hypothyroidism Treated?

The condition is easily treated. Your dog will be put on a daily dose of a synthetic thyroid hormone called thyroxine. There are several different brand names of this drug. The dose and frequency of administration depends on the severity of the disease and your dog's response to the initial dose.

Your dog will be placed on a standard dose for his weight and then a T₄ level will be checked in 4-6 weeks. The dose may be adjusted accordingly. Once therapy is initiated, your dog will need to be on treatment for the rest of his life. T₄ levels are checked twice yearly, to ensure adequate dosing.

