

# Radioiodine treatment (I-131)

Hyperthyroidism is a fairly common disease of older cats. The thyroid becomes overactive and produces excessive amounts of thyroid hormone. Symptoms include increased appetite and thirst, weight loss, vomiting and diarrhea. Restlessness, vocalization and other behavioral changes are also noted. Heart failure may occur in chronic cases.

There are three treatment options available:

**Surgery** to remove the thyroid glands

**Medications** - Methimazole (Tapazole) is the medication given to control hyperthyroidism and are administered orally or transdermally once to twice daily. Possible side effects are GI upset, blood disorders and liver failure. Frequent blood tests are required to monitor effectiveness. Both surgery and medication are viable options for treatment of the disease, but not ideal.

**Radioiodine treatment (I-131)** - If your cat is in good health overall radioiodine treatment is the best treatment option.

- Treatment involves a single injection of the isotope I-131 under the skin which destroys the diseased thyroid tissue.
- Treated cats are hospitalized for 3-5 days.
- There are no significant side effects, and radioiodine is over 95 % effective in curing the disease.
- Pretreatment diagnostics are required to ensure that I-131 is the best treatment option, and to rule out other diseases. Recent laboratory tests (within the past 2-4 weeks) consisting of a CBC, chemistry, T<sub>4</sub>, urinalysis (and possibly a urine culture) and chest radiographs are required. A copy of all T<sub>4</sub> blood test results will aid in calculating the dose of radioiodine your cat needs.
- The main risks of radioiodine treatment are causing low thyroid levels (hypothyroidism) or not resolving the hyperthyroidism completely.
- Studies have shown that cats cured of their hyperthyroidism by radioiodine live up to twice as long as cats when compared to hyperthyroid cats treated with Methimazole.

At VSC, our radioiodine facility has large comfortable cages, a DVD with cat-stimulating videos to keep your cat entertained, and a webcam that you can view during the day. You are welcome to bring a toy or personal item for your cat during their stay, but these items cannot go home with them. Due to state regulations, no visiting is allowed during treatment, but we will call you daily with updates.

If your regular veterinarian has diagnosed your cat with hyperthyroidism ask them for a referral to our facility for a consultation!