



## **ABOUT THE DISEASE**

*Hypothyroidism* is caused by an underproduction of thyroid hormones. It is most common in canine patients and rarely seen in feline patients. These thyroid hormones affect all tissues of the body and are responsible for maintaining metabolism and oxygen consumption.

A deficiency of thyroid hormones can affect every system in the body, including the skin, heart, muscles/bones, reproductive system, nervous system, and even red blood cells. The symptoms are often variable between patients but rarely cause multiple severe life-threatening problems.

Common symptoms include lethargy, weight gain, hair loss (especially on the tail), recurrent skin infections, dull or dry hair coat, overall weakness, and in extreme cases, seizures.

## **OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS**

Confirmation of *hypothyroidism* is done through blood testing for thyroid hormone levels in conjunction with a thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH).

Assessing both values together, patients can be more appropriately classified as truly having *hypothyroidism*.

During states of sickness, the thyroid hormones naturally decline. So if thyroid hormones are assessed when patients are ill, but a TSH is not assessed, patients may be inadvertently diagnosed with *hypothyroidism*.

The phrase “sick euthyroid syndrome” is given to patients who have low thyroid hormone levels encountered during a state of illness, but in fact have a normal functioning thyroid gland.

## **TREATMENT**

When tested properly and treated effectively, *hypothyroidism* is usually a very mild condition with which dogs can live comfortably, happily, and actively for their entire lives.

Patients are placed on lifelong daily supplementation of an oral thyroid hormone (thyroxine).

## **TIPS FOR SUCCESS**

- *Hypothyroidism* is a lifelong condition.
- With proper diagnostic testing and treatment, patients usually have a normal quality of life and lifespan.
- Do not change the dosage or discontinue medication without consulting your veterinarian.
  - Human and veterinary patient doses are not the same.
  - Canine patients often require a much higher dose than humans (as much as 10 times more)
- Recheck examinations are more frequent in the beginning (every few months) but will extend (1-2 times per year) to check patient’s blood levels and dictate changes in medications.