

CANINE HYPOTHYROIDISM

Canine Hypothyroidism- a common endocrine disorder

The thyroid gland is a small gland located under the skin at the center of the neck and is responsible for thyroid hormone production. A gland in the brain (pituitary) signals the thyroid gland to produce and release thyroid hormone into the blood stream which in turn regulates cellular metabolism and function throughout the body. Large and giant breed dogs are more susceptible to developing a condition called hypothyroidism where there is not enough thyroid hormone produced or released from the gland leading to abnormal body metabolism. Hypothyroidism can be a debilitating disease if not treated. When treated, dogs can live a normal and healthy life.

Symptoms

- Lethargy & exercise intolerance
- Weight gain / obesity
- Loss of hair on trunk (but not head or legs)
- Oily skin or dry dull hair coat

Diagnosis

Hypothyroidism is diagnosed by blood work. Many veterinarians choose to run a thyroid panel which measures quantities of different metabolic forms of thyroid hormone. Low values confirm hypothyroidism. Other veterinarians use a blood test called an TSH or thyroid stimulation test where the dog is administered a drug that stimulates the thyroid gland and thyroid hormone levels are measured. Blood samples are taken just prior to TSH administration, and again after six hours. Normal dogs will have a high level of thyroid hormone after 6 hours, hypothyroid dogs will continue to have a very low blood level of thyroid hormone. Some people elect to treat based on clinical sign alone without confirmation via TSH stimulation test, but this is not recommended.

Treatment- for life!

Therapy consists of twice daily oral supplementation with Levothyroxine.

Thyroid levels should be monitored every 6-8 months to ensure that the dog's thyroid supplementation does not need to be adjusted.

Prognosis- Excellent

Although therapy is life long, with proper thyroid supplementation, all clinical signs are reversible.