

Hypothyroidism

Hypothyroidism is a hormonal disease that involves the thyroid gland located in the ventral neck region. The clinical condition is observed primarily in large breed dogs. The primary cause of hypothyroidism is an immune response directed toward the thyroid gland resulting in lower thyroid hormone being produced.

As thyroid hormone is involved in all major aspects of metabolism, clinical signs can involve multiple body systems. Weight gain and fluctuations in body temperature such as heat seeking are common complaints from owners with hypothyroid pets. Dermatologic signs are very similar to other hormonal disorders but include: hair loss involving the trunk, excess scale and dandruff and recurrent skin infections.

The diagnosis of hypothyroidism can be challenging making the condition a common over diagnosed disease. Confirmation of the disease being present is based upon history, clinical signs and blood tests. Many other diseases and medications can artificially lower thyroid hormone levels and must be taken into consideration before diagnosing hypothyroidism. A comprehensive blood panel evaluating multiple aspects of thyroid gland function is recommended rather than a single basic thyroid test.

Medical management of hypothyroidism is a life long required therapy. Medication is a hormone supplement that can be given once to twice a day once the medical condition is under control. Routine blood work is needed to ensure that hormone levels are within normal ranges.