

Common Hormone Problems In Dogs and Cats

Diabetes Mellitus:

One of the most common complaints that pet owners have is an increase in drinking water and urinating. This quickly results in ruined carpets, foul odors in the home and frustrated owners. Your Veterinarian will need to run a few simple diagnostics on the urine (always do your best to bring urine to the exam), and blood to determine the cause of the voiding difficulties.

The major rule outs are a Urinary tract infection, which will usually resolve with an antibiotic treatment, kidney disease, incontinence, Cushing's disease, and Diabetes Mellitus. There are other causes but these are the most common.

Diabetes is a disease of the Pancreas, the "ill" pancreas is not producing insulin at proper amounts or at all, and as a direct result the blood sugar is very high, leading to a variety of symptoms that if not treated, will ultimately lead to death. The most common signs of Diabetes Mellitus are: Increased thirst, frequent urination, weakness, rapid weight loss, depression and abdominal pain.

Among the causes of Diabetes Mellitus are: gender (in dogs females are affected twice as often as males, and in cats the opposite is true), obesity, genetic predisposition, poor diet, hormone abnormalities, stress, and drugs.

Diabetes is a disease that usually cannot be cured but the patient can be regulated and live a happy life for many years. The treatment will probably require daily administration of insulin, exercise and proper nutrition. When diagnosed in time you can expect your pet to have a good quality of life despite their dependence on insulin.

Thyroid gland abnormalities:

The next very common hormonal abnormality that is seen is a thyroid gland ailment. Usually in cats we deal with a hyperactive thyroid and in dogs a hypoactive gland.

Usually our feline friends present with a history of weight loss, hyper activity, and an increased appetite. Occasionally there may be urinary signs (increased water consumption, increased urination), gastrointestinal signs (vomiting and diarrhea), and cardiac signs (irregular heartbeat, congested heart failure) and other not so common symptoms.

Your Veterinarian will need to run blood tests, specific thyroid tests and possibly cardiac screening as well, based on how your cat looks at the time of presentation.

If diagnosed with hyperthyroidism, there are various treatment options. The most common treatments are a drug called Tapazole (anti thyroid drug), radioactive iodine treatment, or surgery. The treatment choice will be made after considering all the risk factors involved and how early or late the disease was diagnosed. It is however realistic in most cases to get a good quality of life following treatment.

Our canine friends usually have the opposite problem with their thyroid glands, as they are diagnosed with a hypoactive thyroid gland.

The major symptoms that are seen include a weight gain, loss of hair often on the tail, flank or hind quarters, dry scaly skin, sometimes oily skin, and a real lethargic attitude. Neurologic signs may be present and include a facial paralysis, weakness, and incoordination.

Your Veterinarian will need to perform testing in the blood to determine if Hypothyroidism is the cause of your dog's malaise and if so a treatment of lifelong thyroid supplementation will begin.

Unfortunately usually the hormone diseases discussed above are controllable but not treatable, and will require lifelong monitoring, and probable dose adjustments, but despite this inconvenience we expect our friends to have an extended good quality of life for many years.

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