

# Crossroads Animal Hospital

Pet Talk

Winter 2017 - 2018

## Your Cat's Health: *Understanding Feline Hyperthyroidism*

Feline hyperthyroidism is a common disease that usually affects cats age 8 and older. Hyperthyroidism is caused by an enlarged thyroid gland that produces too much thyroid hormone, due to a tumor affecting one or both lobes of the gland. In most cases, these tumors are benign; however, in 2% to 5% of cases, they are cancerous. Thyroid hormone affects numerous systems in the body (metabolism, heart, kidneys, and liver), so an unstable thyroid can have disastrous consequences.



Symptoms of an overactive thyroid include:

- Excessive thirst and urination
- Increased appetite
- Aggressive behavior (or overly energetic)
- Yowling
- Weight loss (despite increased appetite)
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Muscle weakness
- Lethargy
- Unkempt coat or hair loss

Your veterinarian will perform a physical exam and a CBC (complete blood count) with a thyroid-specific test known as the T4 panel. During the exam, the veterinarian may be able to feel the enlarged gland. Your cat's heart rate and blood pressure will also be checked. Cats with hyperthyroidism will have an elevated heart rate and high blood pressure.

The results from the blood test will offer a more complete picture and will also rule out other conditions that can present similar to hyperthyroidism, such as chronic renal failure or liver disease.

There are three basic methods of treating hyperthyroidism: drug therapy, radioactive iodine therapy, and surgery. We will discuss treatment options and recommend the best one for your cat. Cats with hyperthyroidism can lead normal, happy lives if they receive proper, on-going treatment.

## Canine Distemper: *A Deadly Virus You Can Prevent*

The canine distemper virus (CDV) is a highly contagious disease that most often affects young, unvaccinated dogs and dogs with compromised immune systems. Sadly, the disease is fatal in over 50% of cases. CDV is usually transmitted through contact with the body fluids of an infected dog or through contaminated food and water, but it can also be carried through the air.

CDV may affect the respiratory, gastrointestinal and neurological systems of the dog. The first sign is a watery or mucousy discharge from the eyes and nose, accompanied by a mild cough or lethargy. More severe symptoms include depression, refusal to eat, vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration, seizures, weakness, involuntary muscle tremors, and paralysis.

Toxin poisoning and other viral, bacterial and protozoal infections can mimic distemper symptoms. Therefore, a veterinarian must rely on clinical signs, the dog's history, and characteristic changes associated with the disease. These include pitting and discoloration of the tooth enamel, thickened and hardened foot pads, and inflammatory changes in the retina. Urine and blood tests can help confirm the diagnosis.

There is no treatment that destroys the virus. Supportive therapy may include IV fluids and nutrition, antibiotics to treat secondary infections, and medicines to relieve GI symptoms. Some infected dogs require hospitalization but milder cases may only need good nursing care at home.

Fortunately, canine distemper is preventable. At birth puppies, receive immunity from their mother's milk but this protection gradually disappears. The puppy vaccines we give in a series beginning at eight weeks old help guard against the virus; however, puppies that have not finished the vaccination series can get distemper. This is why we recommend keeping young puppies away from kennels, parks, puppy classes and other places dogs congregate. Adult dogs should also have their vaccinations kept up to date.

To protect against CDV and other infectious diseases, be sure to comply with the vaccines protocol we recommend. We are committed to your pet's safety and comfort!

## Kitty Care

### *Six Health Problems of Older Cats*

Cats are considered elderly at 10 years old, and it's important to be especially vigilant about your senior cat's health. These six common health problems plague older felines:

#### **1 Kidney Disease and Kidney Failure**

Unfortunately, kidney failure is a leading cause of death in older cats.

#### **2 Hyperthyroidism**

Hyperthyroidism involves the overproduction of hormones that regulate metabolism.

#### **3 Diabetes**

If your elderly cat becomes diabetic, its body will either no longer have enough insulin or will not respond appropriately to normal insulin levels.

#### **4 Dental Disease**

Dental problems are common in older cats and can lead to more serious health problems.

#### **5 Joint disease**

Arthritis is common in older cats but can be difficult to recognize because cats tend to hide pain.

#### **6 Skin problems**

Older cats have thinner skin and are more likely to develop infections.

All of these conditions cause discomfort and affect your cat's quality of life. The good news is that we can manage them if diagnosed early! Your senior kitty should see us at least twice a year for an examination, blood tests and dental care. Call if you notice symptoms between visits.

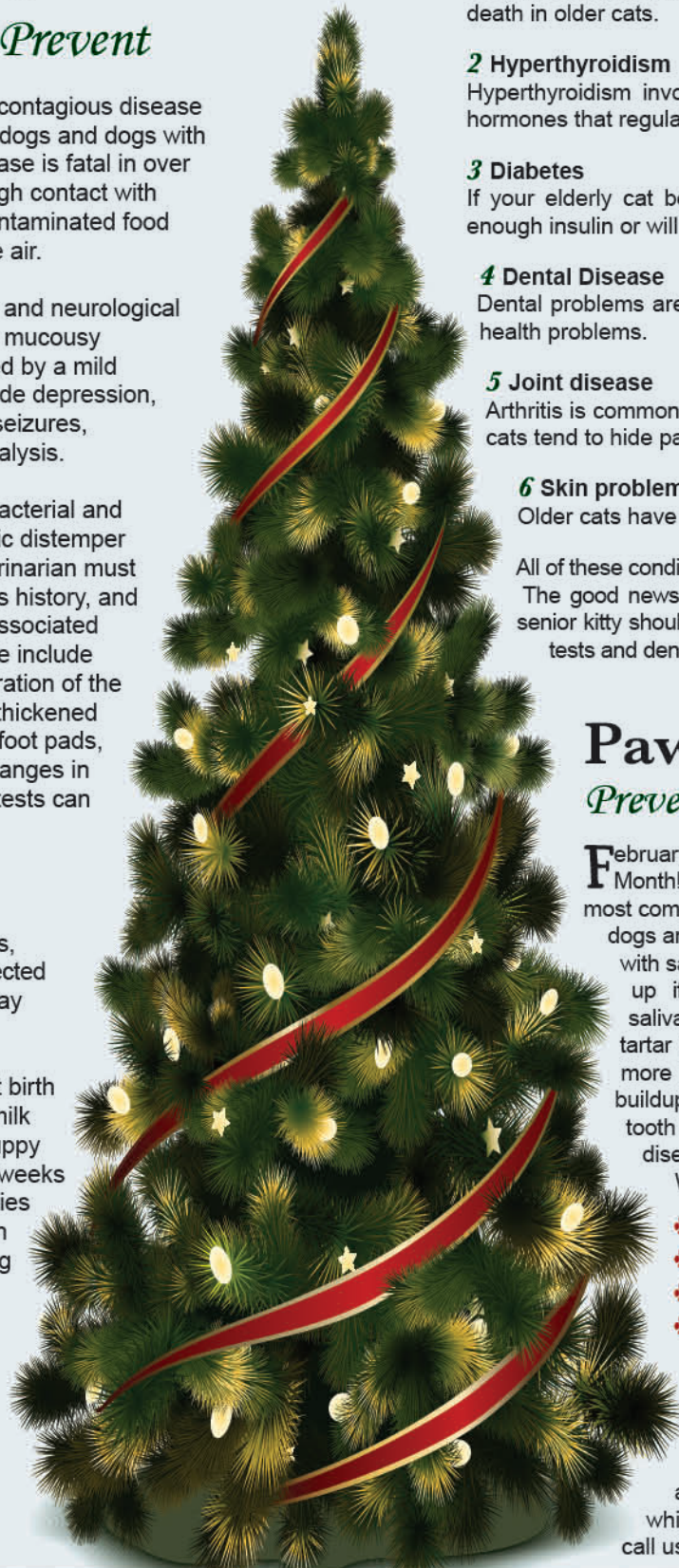


## Paws for Thought *Preventing Dental Disease*

February is National Pet Dental Month! Dental disease is the most common health issue affecting dogs and cats. Bacteria that joins with saliva forms plaque, which builds up if not removed regularly. Then, calcium salts from saliva are deposited on top of the plaque, and dental tartar is formed. Tartar creates a rough surface that causes more plaque to accumulate in a damaging cycle. Plaque buildup often leads to periodontal disease, which can lead to tooth loss. Unfortunately, you may not notice the signs of gum disease until it's advanced—and causing your pet pain. Watch for:

- 🐾 Bad breath
- 🐾 Difficulty chewing food or chewing only on one side
- 🐾 Bleeding gums, blood in drinking water or on toys
- 🐾 Loose teeth
- 🐾 Bloody saliva
- 🐾 Sensitivity to touch in the facial area

Prevention is the best cure for gum disease. Daily brushing and dental chew treats can help. Most dogs and cats need a thorough dental cleaning annually, while older pets may need semi-annual cleanings. Please call us to schedule a cleaning for your furry loved one!



Call (512) 321-0506 today to make an appointment!







# Holiday Hazards

*What Every Pet Owner Should Know*



Each winter, our hospital sees more cases than we'd like to of pets suffering injury or illness from the foods and trappings of the season. Learn how to protect your furry loved ones from these common calamities!

### Foods

- 🐾 Fatty foods can cause acute pancreatitis, which can be fatal.
- 🐾 Xylitol found in sugar-free foods, candy and gum can cause vomiting, seizures and liver failure.
- 🐾 Alcohol depresses the nervous system and can lead to seizures and coma.
- 🐾 Chocolate is toxic to pets. So are macadamia nuts, walnuts, raisins, grapes, coffee, avocados and yeast dough!
- 🐾 Bones from turkey and other meats can cause constipation, choking, and can puncture internal organs. Keep trash out of reach!

### Decorations

- 🐾 Chewing on electrical cords can result in electrocution.
- 🐾 Fireplaces, candles and ovens can result in burns.
- 🐾 Poinsettias, mistletoe and holly are toxic.
- 🐾 Christmas tree lights, ornaments, tinsel and ribbons can cause choking or become tangled in the intestines, requiring surgery.

### Other

- 🐾 Anti-freeze or wiper fluid ingestion can lead to kidney failure and death.
- 🐾 Batteries can cause obstruction and burns to the esophagus.
- 🐾 Guests, changes in routine, excess noise and traveling can cause extreme stress for pets, who generally prefer routine. Stress can lead to many illnesses.

*Being vigilant and seeing the festivities through your pets' eyes will help you make the holidays safe for your four-legged family members. However, accidents do happen. If you see any unusual symptoms, be sure to call us right away!*

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# Happy Holidays

*from Crossroads Animal Hospital*