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Hypothyroidism

Hypothyroidism is a very common condition primarily found in dogs and is basically caused by a deficiency in thyroid hormone. Certain breeds do seem to have a predisposition to developing hypothyroidism. They are Boxers, Golden Retrievers, Dobermans, Irish Setters, Great Danes and Dachshunds. Hypothyroidism can produce several symptoms in dogs. Some of the more common symptoms are weight gain, lethargy, and hair loss. Other symptoms include anemia, slow heart rate, skin infections, poor wound healing and sometimes neurological problems.

Testing for hypothyroidism involves doing a simple blood test. We send most blood samples to a local outside lab that can do a simple screening test. If the thyroid values come back abnormal, we will send an additional sample to a special endocrine lab at Michigan State University to confirm the diagnosis of hypothyroidism. This is done because certain thyroid values can be low for reasons other than hypothyroidism and we want to confirm the diagnosis before starting your pet on any medication.

Once the diagnosis of hypothyroidism is made, your pet will be started on a medication called Soloxine[®], which is a synthetic thyroid hormone. In the majority of cases, your pet will need to remain on this medication for the rest of their life. Blood tests will be checked periodically, more often after the initial start of medication and then about once a year, to make sure your pet is on a therapeutic dose and not too high or too low of a dose. As with any medication, it is very important to keep your pet on these medications and not stop or change the dose without consulting your veterinarian first.