



CANINE HYPOTHYROIDISM

- Dogs have two thyroid glands that sit either side of the trachea (windpipe).
- Thyroid glands secrete thyroid hormone (thyroxine) which is involved in cellular metabolism (chemical processes).
- Hypothyroidism is a condition in which the thyroid glands no longer produce enough thyroid hormone.
- This usually occurs when the dog's own immune system attacks and destroys the thyroid cells within the gland (known as 'lymphocytic thyroiditis') – this is an autoimmune condition.
- Most dogs affected are mid to large breeds between 4-10 years of age.
- Some breeds are predisposed, these include:
 - German Sheppard Dogs
 - Labrador
 - Doberman
 - Golden retrievers
 - Great Danes
 - Beagles
 - Boxers
 - Rottweilers
 - Setters
- Clinical signs:
 - Lethargic behaviour such as lack of interest in play, frequent napping, tiring out on long walks
 - Weight gain
 - Dry skin (+/- skin infections)
 - Chronic ear infections
 - Hair loss, especially on the trunk or tail ("rat's tail" appearance)
 - Discoloration or thickening of the skin where hair loss has occurred
 - Cold intolerance/seeking out warm places to lie down
 - Slow heart rate
 - Reproductive problems
- Hypothyroidism is suspected on clinical signs and confirmed by measuring total thyroxine levels in blood. Borderline cases may require more extensive blood screening to rule out other systemic diseases and assess thyroid reserve.
- The level of thyroid hormone in the blood can be tested:
 - Tablets of synthetic thyroid hormone to restore blood levels
 - Treatment is required for life but with regular monitoring, symptoms usually resolve and dogs can have an excellent quality of life

