

CASE STUDY: "Mouse" Poot

Our first case study is dear to our hearts: Mouse belongs to vets & practice owners Didier & Julie.

Like builder's houses, vet's animals are often the last to get sorted out! Julie & Didi had been aware that Mouse was eating like the proverbial horse but losing weight despite it, for some time. She was bright & energetic though, so for months things never got past the "we must run some bloods on Mouse" stage.

Eventually the eminent arrival of the VSG medical specialist spurred them in to doing a blood test, and as they suspected, Mouse was diagnosed as hyperthyroid.

Hyperthyroidism is a common endocrine (hormonal) condition of older cats. It is caused by a benign growth of the thyroid gland, which causes an over-production of thyroid hormone.

The classic symptoms are weight loss despite a voracious appetite and often hyperactivity and restlessness. Chronic vomiting and diarrhoea, poor coat and various other signs can be seen. Most seriously, hyperthyroidism leads to heart disease and increased blood pressure, which can cause heart failure, sudden blindness or sudden death.

Mouse's bloods ruled out other concurrent disease. (We are always particularly concerned with checking for kidney insufficiency, which of course is also common in old cats and complicates treatment options.)

The treatment options for hyperthyroidism are lifelong oral medication, surgical removal of the affected thyroid gland(s) or radioactive iodine treatment.

Despite belonging to 2 vets, Mouse is almost impossible to tablet, so that option was immediately ruled out.

Thyroidectomy is associated with various risks, both surgical and anaesthetic, due to the heart disease seen with this condition, and has largely gone out of favour.

Radioactive iodine treatment is the safest and most effective treatment. This is accomplished by a simple subcutaneous (under the skin) injection of radioactive iodine, which selectively destroys the affected tissue. The only real problem with this treatment is that the patient becomes radioactive for a few weeks! For this reason the treatment must be carried out in a special facility.

So it was off to Auckland for Mouse! The Veterinary Specialist Group has a purpose-built facility for the treatment of hyperthyroid cats. She was admitted, treated and kept in isolation for a week.

For another week after coming home she had to be considered a slight radiation risk, so was not allowed prolonged close contact. This was the hardest part of the whole process really: convincing her she wasn't allowed to sleep on the bed!

Post treatment blood tests 2 months later confirmed a normal thyroid level & now, a year out, at 14 & ½ years old, she's still fighting fit, & enjoying her new soccer ping pong balls!!

