

## Hypothyroidism

### **What is Hypothyroidism?**

Hypothyroidism is caused by low blood thyroid hormone levels as a result of decreased function of the thyroid gland. Thyroid hormones control the body's speed of metabolism and thus with time the metabolism slows and affects most of the body's organs.

Decreased function of the thyroid gland occurs over time as a result of destruction of the gland by the body's own immune system or degeneration. The underlying trigger for both of these processes has still not been identified. Certain breeds – for example Golden Retrievers, Boxers, Cocker spaniels and Doberman Pinschers – appear to be more susceptible to the condition.

### **Clinical signs**

- Weight gain
- Lethargy
- Dull coat, greasy skin, hair loss

### **How do we diagnose it?**

A blood sample is used to measure the circulating blood levels of thyroid hormone (T4) and a hormone involved in the control of thyroid levels (TSH). As the clinical signs of hypothyroidism are vague and non-specific, bloods are also used to rule out other underlying health problems.

### **How do we manage/ treat it?**

Hypothyroidism cannot be cured, but once diagnosed can be managed lifelong by daily tablets which supplement the body's thyroid hormone levels. Over time the amount required may change and thus regular blood testing is required to monitor this. The clinical signs of hypothyroidism can take several months to resolve once medication has started.

Once stabilised on medication dogs with hypothyroidism can expect to have an excellent prognosis and normal lifespan as long as medication is continued.