Frequently asked questions: I-131 Treatment at Colorado State University (CSU) for hyperthyroidism in cats

What do I need to do prior to coming to CSU?

We suggest having current blood work (within 14 days of treatment date), and urinalysis. The blood work should include complete blood count, biochemistry panel, urinalysis and total T4. Please bring all your cat’s health records. Don’t forget to bring past blood panels, chest x-ray, echocardiograms (if taken) etc.

How long will my cat have to stay?

Most cats require two visits to CSU. The initial appointment is to discuss your cat’s overall health, the goals of the treatment and the possible side effects. If after this consultation you would like to pursue I131 treatment for your cat we schedule a followup “drop off” appointment at a mutually convenient date. At that point, any additional preliminary diagnostics will be performed and the I131 treatment administered over the following days. On average, cats need to spend four days at the hospital during this second visit.

In a few cats, treatment in just a single visit is possible. However, this is only possible if you an appointment a 9:30 a.m. Monday appointment with Small Animal Internal Medicine. Please ask for a 9:30 appointment time for “I-131 treatment”. Please remember, even with this appointment it may not be possible to treat your cat in a single visit.

Do I need to treat my cat with thyroid medicine prior to the treatment?

We do not require cats to undergo what is commonly called a “Tapazole (methimazole) challenge” prior to treatment with I131 but instead evaluate this on a case by case basis. Do not change medications prior to your consultation unless directed to do so by your family veterinarian.

If my cat is on thyroid medication prior to treatment, when do I stop it?

Keep your cat on thyroid medication as directed by your family veterinarian until you have your initial consultation with CSU. Please bring your cat’s medication with you to your consultation at CSU.

Who will be caring for my cat while it is at CSU?

Our trained Nuclear Medicine staff and Internal Medicine nurses will be looking out for your cat and taking care of his/her needs for the week.

Can I visit my cat? Unfortunately, with the high amount of radioactivity, only state certified staff will be allowed to be in contact with your cat.

How much will it cost? The cost to treat most cats is $1,800.00-$2,200.00. You will find our price a little higher than other places in Colorado, but remember we are doing a thyroid scan on your cat prior to treatment.CareCredit.com is a credit card that we accept. You can apply on line and use the card for Medical bill or Veterinary bills.

Please bring your cat’s favorite food for the week and any special treats. One small blanket or t-shirt that smells like home is allowed, but it will not be able to be returned.
POST I-131 TREATMENT

1. **How long do I need to limit contact with my cat?**
   For 2 weeks, limit close contact – do not allow your cat to sleep with you or sit on your lap. Brief contact is fine, but wash your hands after petting your cat.

2. **Can my cat have contact with other cats after treatment?**
   No, you do not need to limit contact with other cats. However, you should wash your hands after contact with any cat in the house during the first 2 weeks.

3. **Can I fly with my cat?**
   You can fly only after your cat reaches a certain low level of detectable radiation. This is lower than what is needed to release the cat to an owner’s house, so you would need to return to CSU to have the radiation levels read before you flew. Alternately, you could have your cat stay at CSU until he/she reaches that lower level, which may take an additional 2-5 days.

4. **Why do I need to use flushable litter for 2 weeks?**
   I-131 is excreted through the urinary system, so will be present in your cat’s urine. If you throw used kitty litter in the trash, it may be detectable as radioactive material and set off alarms.