

Information and Instructions for Referring Veterinarians

Referring a Feline Patient for Radioiodine Therapy

Routine diagnostic testing is essential prior to referral for two key reasons:

1. To accurately calculate the I-131 dose based on:
 - a. Severity of clinical signs
 - b. T4 level
 - c. Thyroid nodule size

Accurate dosing helps avoid extended hospitalization (from overdosing) or the need for repeat treatment (from underdosing). This relies heavily on the information provided by the referring veterinarian.

2. To identify any concurrent geriatric conditions, as hyperthyroid cats are typically seniors.

Important: Once admitted to the radioiodine therapy room, cats cannot be removed until their radiation levels fall below CNSC (Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission) limits, making emergency care difficult.

Required Diagnostic Testing (within 1–3 months of treatment)

- CBC
- Serum chemistry panel
- Complete urinalysis
- T4 (in-house quantitative test is sufficient)

Note: Do not discontinue methimazole before testing.

Additional Recommended Tests (case-dependent)

- SDMA (**Strongly Recommend**)
- Cardiac ultrasound or chest radiographs (especially with significant heart disease or long-standing hyperthyroidism)
- Electrocardiogram (if marked tachycardia, arrhythmia, or other cardiac signs)
- Full-body radiographs (if other disease is suspected)

Contraindications for Radioiodine Therapy

Cats must be stable prior to admission. Those with significant cardiovascular, renal, gastrointestinal, or neurologic disease may not be suitable candidates due to the extended hospitalization required.

Please contact us to discuss any concerns before referring.



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Submitting a Referral

Submit the following documents via our website or email (PDF format) to referrals@riverviewah.ca:

- Medical records
- Referral form
- Radioiodine Therapy Checklist for Referring Veterinarians

Once approved, we will contact the client to schedule a consultation and address any questions. You will receive discharge records and recheck instructions within 24–48 hours after the patient's release.

Release Criteria

- Cats must remain hospitalized for a **minimum of 4 days** following radioiodine administration.
- Discharge is only permitted once radiation levels fall below **CNSC-regulated limits**. If levels remain elevated after 4 days, additional hospitalization will be required.
- At discharge, cats may still excrete small amounts of radioiodine—primarily through urine and feces.

Clients will receive clear, written instructions for the **first 10 days post-discharge**, including:

- Avoiding prolonged close contact with their cat
- Special handling and disposal of cat litter
- General safety precautions to minimize radiation exposure at home

Follow-Up Care

You will receive a discharge summary with recheck instructions. We recommend:

- Exam and T4 recheck and bloodwork at **1 month** and **3 months** post-treatment
- If T4 remains elevated at 3 months, please contact us

T4 may still be high at the 1-month recheck, especially if initially very elevated.

Additional tests to monitor for **Renal or Hepatic issues**:

- Urinalysis (**Strongly Recommended for Renal Function**)

We appreciate receiving follow-up lab results to help monitor treatment efficacy and refine our protocols.



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Possible Complications

Persistent Hyperthyroidism (<3%)

- May require re-treatment
- Re-treatment offered at a reduced cost

Hypothyroidism (<3%)

- If T4 remains low and clinical signs are present, thyroxine supplementation may be needed

Renal Disease

- May emerge post-treatment due to reduced renal blood flow
- Hyperthyroidism can mask pre-existing renal disease
- Radioiodine is no more likely to cause renal issues than methimazole or surgery

Consider a methimazole trial (3–4 weeks) followed by kidney function testing to assess risk.

Thyroid Tumor Regrowth

- Rare cases may develop recurrent hyperthyroidism due to regrowth of abnormal tissue
- This is not considered treatment failure; re-treatment is possible but not covered under the original cost

Thank you for trusting us with your patient's care and referring them for radioiodine therapy.

We're committed to providing compassionate, high-quality care and clear communication throughout the treatment process. During hospitalization, clients receive personalized daily updates and step-by-step guidance to help them feel informed and supported.

Emergency care will be provided if needed, but no additional treatment will be performed without your consent. After therapy, patients are referred back to their primary care veterinarian for ongoing management.

If you have any questions about the treatment or follow-up care, please don't hesitate to reach out. We're here to support both you and your clients every step of the way.

