

## High Pressure Forecast

I am writing this during a period of very warm dry weather with lots of sunshine and more to come with high pressure coming in from the Atlantic! Of course this can be lovely if you are on holiday but not so good if you are at work or stuck in car in a traffic jam. Such frustrations as this can make ones blood boil, or at the very least, increase your blood pressure!

This reminds me of Tabitha who came to visit me for a check up recently. Tabitha is a 14 year old black and white cat who suffers from kidney problems. Her kidneys do not work properly and do not filter the blood sufficiently leading to a rise in waste products in the blood. This classically causes increased thirst but also a host of other problems can subsequently arise.

While examining Tabitha I found she had some small haemorrhages at the back of her eyes which led me to suspect she might have high blood pressure. Blood pressure should ideally be assessed in any cat with chronic kidney disease, hyperthyroidism, heart disease, in cats with sudden onset blindness, or in cats with other signs that might suggest underlying hypertension.

As hypertension is often seen as an effect of other diseases, cats with hypertension may be showing signs attributable to their underlying problem. For example, in the case of hyperthyroid cats with high blood pressure, weight loss (in spite of a voracious appetite) and hyperactivity may be the major clinical signs.

In many patients, no specific clinical signs of hypertension will be seen until the condition advances to the point where there is spontaneous bleeding into the eye or retinal detachment - these cats are often taken to a vet as they develop sudden onset blindness. Early recognition of hypertension is therefore important in order to minimise the severe and often permanently damaging effects of persistently high blood pressure on the eyes and other organs.

Some cats with hypertension appear depressed, lethargic and withdrawn, and many owners notice an improvement in their cat's behaviour once hypertension has been successfully managed, even if signs of damage to other organs are not present. Severe headaches can occur in humans with hypertension, and it is likely that cats may suffer something similar.

Various techniques and equipment are available to measure blood pressure in cats, and many veterinary clinics now have these facilities. The equipment used is often similar to that used routinely in people, with an inflatable cuff placed around one of the legs or the tail. Measuring blood pressure only takes a few minutes, is completely pain-free and is extremely well tolerated by most cats.



Tabitha having her blood pressure measured

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To detect high blood pressure (hypertension) early, and because it is more common in older cats, regular blood pressure checks are recommended in cats from 7 years of age.

Tabitha had her blood pressure taken and it was found to be high. She now has to take tablets every day to control it and have her blood pressure checked every 3 months. Fortunately for her, by doing this, it has stopped her eye problem from worsening and causing her to go blind. So despite having to take regular medication she can still enjoy a good quality of life.

If your cat is getting older and you are worried it may have high blood pressure then talk to your Veterinary Surgeon now and arrange a check up. Then, like Tabitha, you may save it from going blind!

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