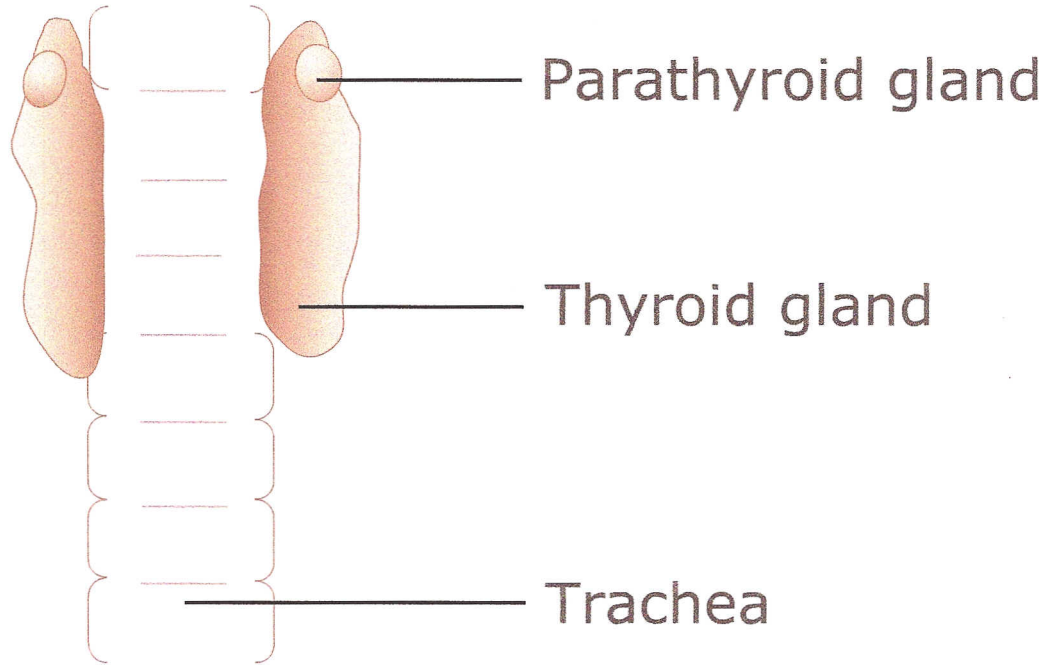


Thyroid Glands: Location and function of the thyroid gland.



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The thyroid glands are located in the middle of the neck beside the trachea or windpipe. They produce thyroid hormones, that control the metabolic rate of the whole body. The production of thyroid hormones is controlled by the pituitary gland, located at the base of the brain. An overactive thyroid gland causes a condition called hyperthyroidism, and increases the body's metabolic rate. An under active thyroid gland causes a condition called hypothyroidism and metabolism slows down. Hyperthyroid disease is more common in cats. The typical symptoms result from the increased metabolic rate and include weight loss, increased appetite and increased urination. Hypothyroidism is more common in dogs and the symptoms include weight gain, sluggishness, excessive hair loss, and recurrent skin infections. Thyroid dysfunction can be the result of disease within either the thyroid gland or the pituitary gland. For further details about specific thyroid diseases, please refer to the appropriate Client Education Handout Series.