



## ANIMAL ANTICS

### Diabetes Mellitus in Dogs & Cats



Most people have heard of diabetes, but few realise that diabetes is a disease that can also affect your pet. In fact, diabetes is a very serious condition and, if not treated properly, can lead to even more serious complications or even death. Therefore, it is important to test your pet for diabetes and to monitor your pet's health effectively after diabetes is diagnosed.

#### Glucose Metabolism in Non-Diabetic Pets

Food is broken down into components that can be used by the body. Conversion of carbohydrates (starches) produces sugars, including glucose. Once absorbed from the intestines, glucose goes into the blood and provides energy to the cells of the body. The intake of glucose into most cells is dependent upon the presence of the hormone insulin. Insulin is produced by specific cells in the pancreas, a special gland situated near the intestines.

#### What is Diabetes Mellitus?

Diabetes mellitus is a form of diabetes that affects your pet's blood sugar levels. A pet with diabetes mellitus is unable to process sugar properly, which means the body is unable to use the energy that sugar provides. Over time, the body becomes ill because of the lack of energy. Meanwhile, the sugar continues to circulate through your pet's body rather than being used.

#### Causes of Diabetes Mellitus

- In some diabetic pets the pancreas producing insufficient insulin
- Failure of the body cells to respond to insulin

#### Results of Diabetes Mellitus

- An inability of the cells to absorb enough glucose
- Overly high glucose levels in the blood

#### What are the Symptoms of Diabetes Mellitus?

There are several symptoms associated with diabetes mellitus. The most common are:-

- Weight loss
- Increased water consumption (polydipsia)
- Increased appetite (polyphagia)
- Increased urination (polyuria)

If you notice any of these symptoms in your pet, it is important to consult with your veterinarian as soon as possible. The sooner a treatment program is started, the more successfully the diabetes can be managed and lessen the risk of complications associated with the disease.

#### How is Diabetes Mellitus Treated?

Diabetes Mellitus can be treated in a couple of different ways, though the main goal is to mimic the pet's natural insulin, which is responsible for regulating sugar. For some pets, simply making dietary changes can be enough to successfully treat diabetes. For others, it is necessary to take oral medications or to take insulin injections.

In order to make certain the treatment program is working, it is important for you to monitor your pet's behaviour, including eating and drinking habits. If you notice any unsatisfactory changes, you need to report the changes to the veterinarian so the treatment program can be changed as necessary. You will also need to test your pet's blood sugar levels in order to better determine if the medication is working properly. Once a treatment program is determined, you may not have to monitor your pet's blood sugar levels quite so frequently. You will, however, need to be certain your pet follows the diet as prescribed and receives all necessary medications.

#### How Do I Monitor My Pet?

There are a couple of different ways that you may monitor your pet's health. One method is to monitor the ketones in your pet's urine. This is done by collecting a sample of the urine and using a testing strip. Unfortunately, ketones take several hours to get to the urine. Therefore, this test reflects your pet's blood sugar level several hours prior to the test rather than the current levels. For up-to-date blood sugar levels, you have to take a blood test. Generally, the blood is drawn from the pet's ear with the help of a lancing device. The blood sample is then placed in a blood glucose monitoring kit, which will provide a reading of the current blood sugar levels.



On a positive note, with exercise, the correct diet and appropriate medication you can successfully manage the health of your diabetic pet.

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