

Diabetes in Pets

Diabetes is an endocrine disease that is brought about by the malfunction of the endocrine glands. Decreased insulin production or delayed secretion of insulin causes the body to not be able to break down carbohydrates, fats and proteins and utilize them for energy. Early diagnosis is very crucial so that the dogs disease can be treated before it causes additional issues. Once diabetes is diagnosed in your pet, regular monitoring is necessary to make sure that your pet remains in good condition despite the onset of the disease.

Symptoms include:

- Increased or excessive urination
- Increased or excessive thirst
- Weight loss
- Urinary Tract Infections
- Liver Disease
- Muscle weakness
- Cataracts
- Neurological Problems

Diagnosis:

Diabetes can be diagnosed by both blood and urine tests. On a diagnostic panel, the blood glucose (sugar) will be elevated and glucose can be found in the urine on a urinalysis. Pets with diabetes may also may have an enlarged or diseased liver. We often see a temporary rise in glucose levels during routine blood work that can be brought on by stress and because of this they may need to be tested more than once for an accurate diagnosis.

Treatment:

Treatment for diabetes depends on the stage of diabetes and your pet's glucose levels. In the early stages, with only mild elevations, adjusting the diet is sometime effective. Dogs sometime respond to high fiber diets which allow for a slower release of glucose into the system and others respond to low carbohydrate diets to reduce insulin demand. Cats respond better to low carbohydrate diets.

When diet changes alone are not enough the next step in treatment is insulin therapy. This requires establishing a fairly strict feeding and treatment regiment and monitoring of blood glucose levels. Choosing which insulin to administer is sometimes trial and error because not all pets respond the same. We have had more effective insulin in the past but some were discontinued. The ones we have now are effective in most cases and newer types of insulin are being tried that show promise.

Dogs that are insulin dependent will require insulin the rest of their lives, but in some cases, cats can start producing their own insulin and stop requiring insulin. Monitoring is important to successful treatment. While high blood glucose causes problems over a period of time, low blood sugar can cause sudden onset of symptoms and if uncorrected can cause death. When too much insulin is given or insulin is given without eating enough, the blood glucose can drop to critical levels in a matter of only a few hours. This is why it is important to set a routine for feeding and administering insulin and monitoring for symptoms of high or low blood sugar.

