



DIABETES MELLITUS

What is Diabetes mellitus?

Diabetes mellitus is sometimes known as “sugar diabetes”. It is a disease where specialised cells in the animal’s pancreas no longer produce enough insulin – which is the hormone responsible for transporting sugar across cell membranes.

When this happens, sugar levels stay high in the blood and this excess sugar starts appearing in the animal’s urine.

Cells deprived of sugar have to look elsewhere for their energy source, so they use body fats as an alternative. As these fats are broken down, the cells release a group of chemicals called “ketones” which are quite poisonous. Eventually, if not treated, the ketones will build up in the animal’s body causing depression, vomiting, coma and death.

Which animals are most likely to get it?

The highest incidence of diabetes mellitus is in dogs and cats between the ages of 5 to 7 years, most frequently in animals that are overweight. In dogs, the most commonly affected breeds are Poodles, Dachshunds, Miniature Schnauzers and West Highland White Terriers.

What are the symptoms?

Increased thirst and urination are the signs most often noticed, along with lethargy, vomiting and general depression. Cataracts (opacity of the lens) of the eyes may also be seen. Thankfully, diagnosis in dogs is relatively easy – high levels of glucose in the blood and/or urine are strongly suggestive when linked with the above symptoms.

In cats, a more rigid diagnosis may be reached following a blood test to assess the levels of a chemical called fructosamine.

How is it treated?

The only really effective treatment is the daily injection of insulin along with adjustment of the carbohydrate content of the diet. The initial stabilisation may often need to be done over a few days at the veterinary clinic. No two cases are ever exactly the same, so defining the right amount of insulin for your pet may take a day or two and will need to be closely monitored over the first few weeks.

Don’t worry – we will show you how to give your pet its daily shot of insulin. You’ll be surprised how easy this can be, and how well your pet will tolerate it! We will also advise you on making the necessary changes to your pet’s diet – which will need to be low in carbohydrates.

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