

**Damory Veterinary
Clinic**

Damory Lodge
Edward Street
Blandford Forum
Dorset
DT11 7QT

Tel. 01258 452626

Damory Veterinary Clinic

Small Animal Factsheet



DIABETES IN DOGS

What is diabetes?

Diabetes Mellitus is a disease caused by the body's inability to produce enough insulin from the pancreas or by the body not responding to the hormone, insulin which is being produced. Insulin is required to take the sugar (glucose) out of the bloodstream and into the body. When there is a lack of insulin, sugar from food builds up in the blood and eventually starts to appear in the urine (glucosuria). Despite the high levels of glucose in the bloodstream, the body is not getting the nutrients that it needs. Therefore the dog will be hungry and thirsty.

Why has my dog got diabetes?

Diabetes usually affects middle-aged to older dogs with un-spayed females being more commonly affected, due to the hormones associated with their season. Obesity is also a risk factor. Certain breeds are more prone to diabetes. These breeds include Poodles, Daschunds, Beagles, Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, Rottweilers and some terriers.

Diabetes can occur due to:

- 1) Inadequate secretion of insulin, such as with immune-mediated disease or pancreatitis
- 2) Resistance to insulin activity, eg obesity
- 3) Antagonism to insulin, eg from hormones, other diseases or, less commonly, steroid use

How would I know if my dog had diabetes?

The most common signs of diabetes are **increased drinking and urination**. Sometimes your dog will have an **increased appetite**, but will **lose weight** despite this. If the condition is untreated, liver disease, problems walking or other illness may develop. If the early signs of diabetes are missed, more serious signs such as vomiting and lethargy or even blindness may develop.

How is diabetes in dogs diagnosed and treated?

A blood test will be needed to confirm high blood glucose levels, along with a urine test to confirm glucose in the urine.

Ideally, dogs should be fed a diet which releases energy slowly, as this helps stabilise the blood sugar. Unlike cats, diet alone is not sufficient to control the diabetes. We would recommend that your dog starts insulin injections.

Your dog will usually come into the surgery to start their insulin therapy, so that we can monitor blood glucose levels during the day. However, as soon as we are happy they are stabilising and you are confident injecting them they can go home.

This may sound daunting at first, but we will continue to help you with this until you feel ready to do it at home. Most owners manage very well. Insulin injections are usually started at a frequency of twice a day, 12 hours apart. The injection is given at the same time as their food and it is important that this regime is kept constant from day to day.

We would recommend spaying female dogs as it is very difficult to stabilise them otherwise.

Storing and injecting insulin

- The administration of insulin is given via a 'VetPen'. You will be given full instructions on how to use it when your pet is started on treatment.
- The VetPen should be kept in the travel pack provided but does not need to be kept in the fridge, as long as it is not exposed to extreme temperatures.

It is very important that your dog eats at the time of injection. If they do not, their blood sugar could become dangerously low, even causing them to seizure or go into a coma.

If your diabetic dog refuses to eat or seems unwell then please contact the surgery for advice.

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