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DIABETES MELLITUS

Diabetes Mellitus:

A disease characterized by a decreased tolerance to carbohydrates (sugars), due to deficiency of insulin. Insulin is a hormone secreted by special cells in the pancreas, which is responsible for the proper metabolism of all body tissues. Without proper insulin levels, serious changes occur within the body that leads to coma and death. It is a common problem in both cats and dogs. Certain breeds such as terriers, poodles, cocker spaniels, and dachshunds are more frequently affected.

Although the exact cause of Diabetes Mellitus is not known, several factors are known to be involved including genetics, diet, obesity, age, and complications from injury and illness.

Despite extensive research (especially in the field of human medicine), there is no known cure. Therefore, once it has been diagnosed, all medical attempts are to control the disease. This involves daily administration of insulin for the remainder of the pet's life. The oral form of insulin is not effective in animals. Once properly regulated, the majority of diabetic pets can maintain normal lives. Home care involves daily administration of insulin and feeding a well-regulated high quality diet. A high-protein, low-carbohydrate commercial food (preferably canned food) should be fed at a constant time and quantity level. The amount of food ingested will affect the amount of insulin required.

The diabetic pet should be fed twice daily, or in small multiple feedings to coincide with the peak insulin levels (8-10 hours after injection when using NPH Insulin). Constant moderate exercise is important to properly maintain the daily insulin requirement.

For female diabetic pets, Ovariohysterectomy (spaying) should be performed as soon as possible due to complicated interactions between insulin and the female hormones secreted by the ovaries.

During the first few weeks of treatment, several consultations and tests are necessary to properly regulate the patient to insulin therapy. Changes in insulin dosage, frequency of injection, diet, or exercise may be required.

Notify the clinic if any of the following complications occur:

- You are unable to administer the medication as directed.
- Your pet develops weakness or fatigue after exercise, begins to shake or tremble, or seems mentally confused. This may result from refusal to eat, sudden vigorous exercise, or from vomiting of the evening meal. Excessive insulin dosage may also cause these problems. Giving several tablespoons of corn syrup or honey may control the low blood sugar episodes.
- Your pet experiences difficult breathing, weakness, depression, or will not eat.
- Your pet develops diarrhea or vomits.