



Feline Forum

Courtesy of:

Diabetes Is Common in Older Cats

Diabetes mellitus in the cat is the same disease that is commonly called "sugar" diabetes in people. This disease is caused by a deficiency of insulin, a hormone produced by the pancreas. Insulin regulates the metabolism of sugar in the body. The unmetabolized sugar is excreted in the urine. The first signs of the disease are increased urine output and increased thirst. Lethargy, increased appetite, weight loss, rear leg weakness, diarrhea, and vomiting will occur if the disease progresses. Middle-aged and older cats are at greatest risk for developing diabetes.

Diagnosis is based on the cat's history, physical examination and laboratory tests. If diabetes is present, urinalysis results will reveal sugar in the urine. In more advanced cases, toxic ketone bodies will also be found. The cat is usually hospitalized from four to ten days during which time the diagnosis is confirmed and treatment is started to stabilize the patient.

Home treatment of diabetes requires strict adherence to a predetermined time schedule, close attention to detail, and vigilant observation. Therapy usu-

ally consists of hypodermic injections of insulin given under the skin once or twice daily. With proper treatment it is possible for the diabetic cat to lead a normal life.

Breast Cancer Occurs in Cats

Breast (mammary) cancer is the third most common cancer in cats, after skin cancer and lymphosarcoma. Cats at high risk include middle-aged cats (10 years and older), Siamese and domestic short hair breeds, and intact female cats. There is no evidence that spaying female cats before one year of age lowers the incidence of mammary cancer.

Feline mammary tumors grow rapidly and spread quickly. Approximately two-thirds of afflicted cats have multiple tumors. Survival rate appears to be inversely related to the size of the tumor—the smaller the tumor the longer the survival time.

Your veterinarian may perform a biopsy (removing a small tissue sample) and chest radiographs to assist in diagnosis and to determine the extent of involvement. The preferred method of treatment is surgical removal of the affected tissue (i.e. radical mastectomy). Frequent follow-up examinations should be arranged with your veterinarian to check for the possible return of cancer.

Antifreeze Is Poisonous

Antifreeze poisoning of animals is most common during the autumn months when automobile radiator fluid is changed, but also occurs frequently in the spring, while cars are being repaired. Cats may be attracted to the semisweet taste of antifreeze, and are the most susceptible of all animals to antifreeze poisoning.

Cats that have been poisoned with antifreeze appear to walk with an odd gait, vomit, and lose their balance. Eventually symptoms progress to depression, weakness, diarrhea, coma and death within 24 to 48 hours due to the build-up of acids in the cat's blood. Cats that survive the first one to two days enter a state of kidney failure and will die in two to four days without treatment.

Treatment for antifreeze poisoning must be started as early as possible. A delay of greater than four to 12 hours can prove fatal.

The information for *Feline Forum* has been prepared by the Cornell Feline Health Center, Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine, Ithaca, NY. Copyright 1991.



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