



# DIABETIC CATS IN NEED

• A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization • PO Box 21, Minot, Maine 04258 • Fax: (757) 257-0030 • THH@dcin.info

## **DCIN Recommendations for Diabetic Cats in Shelters**

*Published 8/19/21; Copyright © 2021*

*Prepared by:* Tania Hamboyan Harrison, Diabetic Cats in Need (DCIN) Board Member;  
*Reviewed by:* Dr. Renee Rucinsky, DVM, DABVP (Feline Specialty) at Mid Atlantic Cat Hospital and co-chair of the 2018 AAHA Diabetes Management Guidelines for Dogs and Cats (<https://www.aaha.org/aaha-guidelines/diabetes-management/diabetes-management-home/>)

**Introduction & Goals:** DCIN acknowledges the extraordinary challenge of caring for diabetic cats in shelter environments. The goals of this document are: to lower the cost of care for shelters, to improve the treatment of diabetic cats in shelters, and to facilitate adoptions of diabetic cats from shelters into loving homes.

**Diagnosis:** If a cat is exhibiting signs of excessive urinating and excessive thirst (PU/PD), with your veterinarian's guidance, we recommend testing urine, complete blood count (cbc), chemistry, and t4. If that amount of testing is above budget per cat, we recommend prioritizing urinalysis. One high blood glucose test result does not necessarily mean a cat is diabetic; infections and/or stress could be contributing factors, especially in a shelter environment. It's important to rule out infections before labeling a cat “diabetic”. If a cat has no evidence of infections, a fructosamine test can be a helpful diagnostic to differentiate between cats that are diabetic vs. cats that are significantly stressed from the shelter environment.

### **Treatment:**

If a cat has ketones in the urine, insulin therapy must be started immediately. **Ketotic cats are considered critical and should ideally be hospitalized for stabilization. Please consult your veterinarian immediately in this situation.** If a cat is diagnosed with diabetes and has no evidence of ketones, changing the cat's diet to canned-food-only may be both an effective way to lower blood glucose levels and can be cost-effective compared to prescription foods. Approximately 9-12 ounces of canned food per day may be necessary for uncontrolled diabetic cats; this should still be more cost-effective than prescription food. Removing dry food from a cat's diet usually will result in lower blood glucose levels. Monitor for glucosuria twice weekly during this time.

If hyperglycemia persists after 7-10 days of canned-food-only diet—or if the cat begins having ketones—insulin therapy is likely required. **Insulin therapy should not be started without veterinarian guidance. Conservative feline insulin dosing methods are suggested. Please see the 2018 AAHA Diabetes Management Guidelines for dosing suggestions, and consult your veterinarian.** Lantus or ProZinc are the recommended starting insulins for cats. If the shelter is unable to administer Lantus or ProZinc, Vetsulin can be used with caution; Vetsulin use in cats will not usually provide 24 hour glucose control.

Testing blood glucose levels prior to each insulin dose can be extremely helpful, particularly during initial diabetic regulation, with the understanding that many shelters do not have enough staff or manpower to accomplish this. Shelter situations, however, are inherently stressful, and the blood glucose level may be affected. When necessary, insulin can be given without testing blood glucose levels. Due to the reality of shelter life, leaving a small amount of DM dry food in the cat's cage overnight may be prudent to prevent hypoglycemic episodes while the cat is left unattended overnight. A foster home is almost always a better environment for a diabetic cat, but may not always be possible.

DCIN can provide shelters with Lantus insulin and blood glucose testing supplies as needed.

**Diabetic cats should have their blood glucose levels, food intake, weight, and urine output monitored as closely as possible.**

**Adoptions:** For cats whose hyperglycemia resolved with diet change, any adopter able to continue the diet change should be considered. The adopter should be encouraged to follow up with their vet within a month of adoption. For diabetic cats who require insulin, adopters should be encouraged to follow up with their vet within one week of adoption. Adopters should be educated on the signs of hypoglycemia prior to adoption. DCIN is also willing to be a resource for new diabetic cat owners; please feel free to provide adopters of diabetic cats DCIN's website (<https://dcin.dreamhosters.com/>) and facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/DiabeticCatsInNeed/>).