

Diabetes and Cats

CAT FANCY Consumer Marketing Manager Suzanne Stowe blogs about her experiences managing diabetes in cats - and herself.

By Suzanne Stowe

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Benji, right, next to his Tonkinese buddy, Kyli, had his life prolonged with insulin injections after being diagnosed with diabetes. As a pet sitter, I have encountered all sorts of pets with all sorts of medical problems. One problem that I am seeing more and more is a cat with diabetes. The good news is that with insulin and diets that are available now, caring for a cat with diabetes is a manageable task and does not mean a pet parent cannot travel.

I was diagnosed with diabetes myself more than 13 years ago (Type 2). When first diagnosed, I managed it with medication, but eventually I had to start injecting insulin. I was a little scared at first at the thought of injecting myself several times a day, but quickly became very comfortable with the process. I also felt much better on insulin therapy and was better able to control my blood sugar.

Transferring my knowledge of self-injections to injecting cats with insulin was natural for me. I have cared for several diabetic kitties and they are usually very easy to inject.

One cat in particular is special. Spunky is a large domestic shorthair. He is about 12 years old and has other health problems in addition to being diabetic. When it is time for his shot, I just tap the top of the dining-room table. Spunky jumps up, gets a few pets and then is ready to have his shot. He has to be watched for a while after his shot to make sure he doesn't get hypoglycemic (when blood sugar is too low), but that has never occurred when I care for him. After his shot, I give him a little treat and some more pets while he purrs like crazy.

My mother's pet Abyssinian, Benji, was diabetic, too. Mom was able to administer his insulin herself after being shown by her veterinarian how to do it. Benji's diabetes eventually became unmanageable, but his life was prolonged a few years and the quality of his life was better because of the insulin.

If your cat is diagnosed with diabetes, work with your veterinarian to manage it. Don't feel you can't travel but make sure you hire a pet sitter who has experience taking care of diabetic kitties. As a team, you, your veterinarian and your pet sitter can improve your pet's quality of life significantly. It can be expensive for the medication and special diet, but well worth the expense.