

## My Cat Has Diabetes Complications

**CatChannel veterinary expert Arnold Plotnick, DVM, gives advice on different varieties of insulin.**

*By Arnold Plotnick, DVM*

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**Q:** I have a domestic shorthair tabby, a 12-year old neutered male. The problem is neuropathy from diabetes. He did not present with excessive thirst or hunger, but did present with a weak back end and weight loss.

Here is where I need some help. When he is on the Vetsulin, he drinks and drinks to the extreme. He becomes fussy and goes under the bed and seems to sleep a lot. Could this be a bad combo for my particular cat? My vet cannot answer why he is drinking so much and cannot explain the change in my cat. I have heard that bovine insulin is a better match for cats; I am wanting to change the form in which Cobie receives his insulin in hopes that it will help him. I am considering the pills as well. His sugar remains in the 300s.

**A:** Vetsulin is porcine insulin; it is derived from pigs. Studies have shown Vetsulin to be very safe and effective.

If your cat is truly not responding to the Vetsulin, there could be several reasons. The most likely reason is that your cat is simply not receiving enough insulin. You didn't say how much your cat weighed, or how much insulin your cat is receiving. If your cat is receiving more than 1 unit per pound of body weight per dose, and continues to show signs of poor control (drinking a lot, urinating a lot, continued neuropathy in his rear legs), then your cat may be experiencing insulin resistance. If that's the case, a thorough evaluation for concurrent illness needs to be undertaken.

One possible (but uncommon) cause of poor response to insulin would be the development of anti-insulin antibodies. The insulin you're giving is a foreign protein, and some cats' immune systems react to this pig-derived protein by making antibodies against it. The antibodies neutralize the insulin so that it is ineffective. Bovine insulin is derived from cows. Feline and bovine insulin are very similar to each other. They differ by only one amino acid. If anti-insulin antibodies are suspected as a cause for your cat's poor response to the Vetsulin, then switching to bovine-derived insulin may result in a better response. Again, this is very uncommon, and I doubt that this is your cat's problem.

Forget about using oral medication to control his diabetes. Insulin is more effective than oral medications. If he's not responding well to insulin, he's unlikely to show a better response to the pills.