

***We have at least one customer per week seeking help with what to feed a diabetic cat. I have found an excellent book on all matters of feline health care, "Your Cat" written by Feline Veterinarian Elizabeth Hodgkins, DVM. Below are some excerpts from her website [www.yourdiabeticcat.com](http://www.yourdiabeticcat.com). Dr. Hodgkins is one of the few veterinarians who are willing to publicly state that most commercial pet foods are the absolute worst things to feed your cat. Yes, this is in direct disagreement with most veterinarians who recommend foods made by Hills and Iams/Ekanuba. I applaud the courage of Dr. Hodgkins to stand up for what she truly believes in.***

***Connie Roller, Manager  
The Feed Bag Pet Supply***



I am delighted to welcome you to a new forum for those who are presently caring for a diabetic cat, or anyone who is interested in the subject of managing, curing, and *preventing* diabetes in our pet cats. My name is Dr. Elizabeth Hodgkins and I have been studying this disease for over a decade. I have conducted research into this condition and have worked with many hundreds of diabetic kitties. Through all of that, I have discovered some very important things about feline diabetes. This forum is a place for me to share that knowledge and for those who are caretakers of diabetic cats to speak with one another about their experiences with their pets.

Let me say first that I am committed to the management technique known as "tight regulation." This technique uses what we know about the causes of feline diabetes to reverse the processes that have caused the otherwise normal cat to develop this potentially life-threatening disease. In my hands, tight regulation can and does allow over 80% of diabetic cats to cease their dependence on insulin and become well again. As a veterinarian for almost 30 years, I have tried every technique known to veterinary medicine and can say with great confidence that this is the only one that works with this level of success.

There is nothing about tight regulation that is mysterious or difficult. As I say to my clients, the successful treatment of feline diabetes is not "rocket science." Rather, it is a very logical approach to the known origins of the problem to which cats seem to respond extremely well, in every case. Even those few cats that do not become free from dependence on insulin become much healthier and happier cats with high quality of life.

As important as the proper management of feline diabetes is, it may be even more important that cat lovers learn to prevent this terrible disease in any cat with whom they ever share a home in the future. Diabetes in the cat is a man-made disease, which is completely preventable by avoiding the "kitty junk-food" that is dry

kibbled cat food. Without question, it is the continuous, day-in, day-out consumption of this poor-quality, highly processed, carbohydrate rich "breakfast cereal for cats" that causes so many felines to become diabetic.

Many cats also become obese from such a terrible diet, but obesity does not cause diabetes, as some experts would have cat owners think. Rather, obesity and diabetes simply have the same cause, non-nutritious, high carbohydrate commercial cat food. To prevent both obesity and diabetes, we need only avoid such junk food when we feed our cats. Instead, we must feed the cat what it evolved to eat: meat. Fortunately, there are many canned and pouched cat foods, as well as many recipes for raw meat diets, that provide good quality nutrition of the obligatory carnivore that is the cat.

You will hear some experts say that dietary fat causes diabetes. This is simply not true. The pet food companies, all of which use massive amounts of cereal to make their dry cat foods, wish to deflect criticism from this terrible ingredient for cats. Most commercial cat foods are quite low in fat; if this ingredient were responsible for feline diabetes, we would see very little of it. These same experts will tell you that the key to a good diet for diabetic cats is high protein, this is simply not true. It is dietary CARBOHYDRATE, pure and simple, not high fat or low protein that leads to diabetes in cats.

If you reduce the carbohydrate in a diet, you must increase the protein or the fat in the diet, or both, in order to take the place of the reduced carbohydrate, so low carbohydrate diets will often have higher protein as a result. It is not the increase in protein that makes these diets work, however, it is the reduction in carbohydrate that gives the results. The cat's natural diet is high in protein (about 45-70% dry matter), moderate in fat (about 15-35% dry matter), and very low in carbohydrate (0-5% dry matter). Contrast this with the breakdown of most dry kibble for cats with moderate protein (22-34% dry matter), low fat (10-25% dry matter) and very high carbohydrate from processed cereals (35-50% dry matter). Clearly dry cat foods are entirely upside-down compared to the natural prey diet of the cat. You *cannot* put the wrong fuel in any engine, day after day, year after year, without dire consequences.

## **Diet**

Because improper diet is the cause of type II diabetes mellitus in the cat, diet must be the foundation of the management of this disease. Although the veterinary profession has been conditioned to believe that high-fiber dry diets are capable of assisting in the management of feline diabetes, the reality is that this disease has historically been extremely difficult to deal with because of this mistaken belief. The practice of using dry form, high-fiber diets for our diabetic patients **is utterly in error**. In fact, high-fiber dry foods have two massive flaws. The first is the high amount of carbohydrate in them (no, they are not immune from the requirement of extruded foods for high cereal content) which promotes high blood glucose notwithstanding the fiber contained in them. These diets are usually "low fat" as well as high-fiber and because of this, much of the usual fat in the formula has been replaced with even more digestible carbohydrate than is present in regular formulas (in the highly mistaken belief that it is dietary fat that makes cats fat).

The second serious flaw is the high fiber itself. As an obligatory carnivore, the cat's GI tract is short compared with that of the dog or humans. During evolution, the

cat's gastrointestinal tract adapted to the intake of calorie-dense, vegetation-poor foods by reducing its length and ability to undertake prolonged digestion of fibrous foods. High fiber foods ignore this fact, providing an unnatural burden on the feline GI tract that results in excessive system bulk and reduced nutrient absorption.

Therefore, to manage feline type II diabetes, the patient must be provided a diet that is high in protein, moderate in fat, and ultra low in carbohydrate, especially carbohydrate from extruded cereals and those with high glycemic indices, like corn and potato. No feline diabetic should eat any type or brand of dry food. This includes all of the dry formulas labeled as "for the management of diabetes." Allowable foods include low-fiber canned foods designated "for the management of diabetes," and a number of other brands of canned or pouched foods with low carbohydrate content. Raw meat can also make an excellent diet for cats, diabetic and non-diabetic alike.

To find a good wet commercial food for any cat, be sure to read the label on the can or pouch. If you see ingredients like corn flour, corn grits, corn gluten, rice or rice flour, potato, sweet potato, carrots or any kind of fruit, don't feed that food. Cats do not need cereals, vegetables or fruit. These ingredients are included because they appeal to the pet food purchaser. They have nothing whatsoever to do with good feline nutrition.

Not only will a low carbohydrate canned food reduce the wide blood glucose swings seen in feline diabetics, it will also reduce the pathologic overeating seen in cats consuming dry foods that provide little or no sense of appetite satisfaction.