

Diabetes

(Diabetes Mellitus, 'Sugar Diabetes')

Glucose is a simple carbohydrate and the body's preferred fuel source. Blood sugar levels are regulated by two hormones - insulin and glucagon. Insulin distributes the sugar into the cells and thus lowers blood sugar levels. Glucagon stimulates sugar production in the liver and thus raises blood sugar levels.

In mammals such as your dog or cat, diabetes is a result of a deficiency of insulin or other factors that prevents insulin from working properly. In parrots, diabetes seems to be due to an excess of glucagon that keeps sugar levels abnormally high.

Signs To Watch For:

- Always hungry and thirsty (similar to mammals). Seems to spend all day eating and drinking.
- Watery droppings.
- Losing weight despite eating all day.
- General signs of a sick bird.

Veterinary Care: A complete history and physical examination are essential, which may include blood work and urinalysis. The only treatment is daily injections of insulin. However, since diabetes is caused by an excess of glucagon, insulin therapy may not always be effective in lowering blood sugar levels. Controlling weight loss is very important. Hospitalization is required until an effective dose of insulin can be established. Afterwhich, the injections can be given at home. There must be a strong committment by the pet owner. Dietary changes are necessary. Injections must be given daily and sugar levels monitored regularly. There is no cure but can be controlled and the bird can live a longer and healthier life.