

Dealing With a Dog's Diabetes

Suzanne Stowe

November 25, 2008, 3 p.m. EST

As a pet sitter, I have encountered all sorts of pets with all sorts of medical problems. One that I am seeing more and more is diabetes. The good news is that with the insulin and diets that are available now, caring for a dog with diabetes is a manageable task and does not mean a pet parent cannot travel.

I was diagnosed with diabetes 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 dogs with insulin was natural for me. So far, I have had only one dog with diabetes to care for, and she is a most special dog.

Scout is a 9-year-old yellow Labrador Retriever. She has Cushing's disease and thyroid disease in addition to diabetes. But with all these problems, Scout is a sweetheart and very easy to care for. She has her meal, then you tell her "it's time." Scout then rolls over on her back, lifts her front legs, and allows you to inject her insulin under her arms. It doesn't seem to hurt her at all. After her shot, she takes a pill in a pill pocket and thinks it is a treat.

Scout shares her home with two kitties, Zak and Taz. Zak loves Scout and will rub up against her while purring. I have never seen any confrontation between Scout and the cats. Scout is always in good spirits and doesn't let her health issues affect her mood. She does have to get up in the night to go potty (frequent urination is a symptom of diabetes) and does have some gas.

If your dog 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 pets. As a team, you and your veterinarian can improve your pet's quality of life significantly. It can be expensive for the medication and special diet, but well worth the expense, especially for a sweet dog like Scout who deserves the best possible care.

- Read more Confessions of a Dog Sitter -