Potassium Requirements in Cats

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Function of potassium

Potassium is found in high concentrations within cells. Potassium is necessary for the proper functioning of enzymes, muscles, and nerves. It is also necessary to maintain a proper fluid balance throughout the body.

Dietary sources of potassium

Potassium is widely distributed in many foods so deficiencies in the diet are not likely if cats are fed complete and balanced cat foods.

Daily potassium requirements

Cat and dog foods should contain at least 0.6% potassium (on a dry matter basis). Almost all pet food diets will meet the requirements of a normal cat or dog. Additional potassium may need to be added to the diet of pets suffering from the diseases which result in an increased loss of potassium as described below.

Potassium deficiency

Potassium deficiency in the body is most often due to an excessive loss of potassium rather than too little dietary intake. Like sodium and chloride, potassium deficiency can occur in animals that have chronic diarrhea and/or vomiting, burns, kidney disease or other illnesses which result in a loss of potassium from the body. Potassium deficiency can also occur if diuretics such as Lasix are given for long periods of time. Symptoms of potassium deficiency include cardiac arrest (the heart stops beating), nervous disorders, loss of appetite, poor growth, and weakness. Low blood potassium is a serious condition and animals with prolonged vomiting or diarrhea should be seen by a veterinarian.

Potassium toxicity

Potassium toxicity generally does not occur from excessive intake as long as the kidneys are functioning normally. The potassium level in the blood, however, can reach a dangerous level in a disease called hypoadrenocorticism or Addison's Disease. This is a disease in which the adrenal gland does not produce enough of the hormone that helps regulate the amount of potassium in the blood.

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