

Feline urinary issues: Prevention is key

Did you know?

- Stress is a common factor in urinary issues
- Only 3% of all urinary issues respond to antibiotics
- The other 97% require long term management to prevent recurrences
- Long term management of urinary issues involves optimising bladder health through nutrition, reducing stress levels, and maintaining a healthy weight

What causes urinary issues?

Urinary issues can be caused by a number of conditions such as bladder stones and infections but more than 50% of cases are caused by Idiopathic Cystitis - a condition of unknown cause which results in ulceration, bleeding and thickening of the bladder. These changes in the bladder cause the cat to strain while urinating with small spots of urine (sometimes bloody) around the house.



It's important to note that straining may also indicate a urinary obstruction – which is considered an emergency. It is important to seek veterinary advice if you notice your cat straining.

What causes stress in cats?

Cats can be either solitary or social and each has their own territory. Cat territories are large and are not defined by wall, doors or fences. The problem with the urban environment is that these territories overlap which results in increased stress levels.

My cat sleeps all day – how can he be stressed?

Amazingly enough, lazy cats are bored cats and bored cats have increased levels of stress. A way to counteract this, and increase your cat's activity levels, is to create some environmental and feeding stimulation. This is important in all cats but this becomes especially important when house soiling is already taking place, or where symptoms of stress are noted. Signs of stress can be very subtle – look out for unusual behaviour such as increased startle responses, nervousness and excessive over- or under-attachment to owners may all indicate underlying stress.

How can I optimise my cat's environment?

Part of the prevention strategy is to create some excitement in our cats' lives, and recreate the "hunt" as part of the feeding process. If they are particularly prone to stress, introduce these changes slowly.

Increase your cat's activity levels by using with a feather wand for short burst of 1-4 minutes at a time a few times a day. If you use a laser pointer, make sure that you that it lands on something tangible (like a soft toy) to avoid frustration with the "hunt". Use puzzle or treat balls to make them work for their food.

Allow your cat(s) to choose their preferred safe location to eat, drink and interact by offering multiple locations for water bowls, food bowls and sleeping posts. Cats love elevated sleeping areas so provide some sleeping posts or enclosures (even a cardboard box) for each cat – preferably near windows and sunny spots.

Especially during winter, make sure that there are at least 2 litter trays in the house (in quiet locations). If you have more than one cat then make sure that there is a litter tray per social group plus one. Experiment with locations and litter type and even use soil from the garden initially if your cat is not used to litter trays. Balancing on the edge of litter boxes with only one or two feet inside the box may indicate an aversion to litter type or soiled litter which would be worth addressing.

My cat's got bladder issues – what should I do?

Veterinary visits are needed to identify the cause of the urinary issue - as most of them will present with similar symptoms, urine tests are needed to rule out other conditions such as bladder stones and infection. Draw a basic house floor plan before visiting your vet - with litter box locations, house-soiling locations, windows and doors, scratching post locations, food and water bowl locations, cat door or flaps. This helps your vet identify possible causes and solutions to the problem.



Diet can be used to optimise bladder health in cats with or predisposed to bladder disease. The wet food versions of these diets have the added benefit of increase water intake. Ask one of our vets if Eukanuba Urinary Struvite is the right diet for your cat.

If your cat has been urinating in a specific area, use enzymatic urine removers (such as Trouble & Trix No More Stains & Odours) to remove the urine and any trace of the smell. Do not use ammonia-based products as these can mimic the smell of urine and worsen the situation. A black light can be used to identify the urine marked areas for thorough cleaning.

If they continue to urinate in undesirable areas, use repellent sprays (such as Aristopet Indoor/Outdoor Repellent Spray), crinkly plastic, tinfoil or upside-down carpet protectors (with the rough nubs on top) to keep them away from the area.

