

FELINE HOUSE SOILING PROBLEMS

Despite the cat's reputation for fastidious cleanliness, house soiling is the number one behaviour problem of our feline friends. Urinating in odd places is usually caused by a behavioral problem, sometimes by a medical problem. Sometimes the difference is not clear cut & sometimes both types of problem will co-exist in the one cat!

Some reasons for inappropriate urination (that is urinating in unexpected/unacceptable places) are purely behavioral and include psychological stress, such as the presence of other cats, prolonged absence of the owner (who is usually viewed as a parent by the pet cat), or other problems may create a need for a cat to reassert a territorial claim. Signs that this kind of stress is causing the problem might include some or all of the following:

The area marked involves the owner's bed or laundry.

The area marked is the same each time.

Behavioral & Environmental modification

This is the cornerstone of addressing stress induced inappropriate urination.

LITTER TRAYS.

It is common practice for pet owners to put a single litter tray at ground level in the place that is most convenient for the owner, typically the laundry. The food and water are often close by as is the washing machine and tumble dryer. Whilst this may be acceptable to many cats, it is not ideal and is not acceptable to a significant number of cats who will then seek what they see as more suitable places.

Provide SEVERAL litter trays in safe, private areas away from food sources. Cats prefer to eliminate and eat in separate areas.

They should be kept as clean as possible to encourage their use.

Trial different cat litters - your preference may not be his and some cats are real fussy.

The litter trays you are using may be too small. Be prepared to get bigger trays if necessary.

INTER PET CONFLICT

Ensure that your cat does not need to compete for food, bedding or attention.

Ensure that he is able to get away to a 'safe haven' from other pets, children or dogs, human visitors (which your cat may seem as intruders) when he needs to- an elevated place is best.

TERRITORIAL CONFLICT

Sometimes intruder/tresspasser cats are the issue. If this is the case deny your cat access to the windows where he can see the 'trespassing' cat'. Ideally prevent those cats from entering your property this may not be feasible but it is the ideal and may be the single most important issue for some cats with house soiling problems.

STIMULATION

Provide some play time using things like fishing poles toys and balls etc. This relieves stress and boredom.
Provide some vertical areas such as a cat post with scratching post, climbing area, and platforms.

BREAK THE HABIT

Your cat may go back to the areas he has used before out of habit and because they now contain his scent.
Clean - with a biological washing powder/detergent and rinse well, then spray with methylated spirit (surgical grade unscented ideally)

Allow area to dry before allowing him access to the area again

Redefine the function of the area:

He will not want to soil the location as much if it is a sleeping/eating or playing area

Eg put a cat pole over the area that he can climb, or put his bed there

Use that area as a feeding station for him

OR

Make that area unattractive for him to walk on by covering with foil or double sided tape, or placing a tray of marbles there that he wont want to walk on. Some people have success with citronella scented candles or air freshener blocks placed at the site.

*Do not punish him if caught in the act: this often creates more problems than the original one.

PHERIMONES

You could also consider using a pheromone: feline pheromones of the type that cats deposit when performing facial marking (i.e., rubbing their face/cheeks on things to scent mark). These pheromones have a general calming effect that helps neutralize the urge to urine mark.

They are applied to the area rather than being medication administered to the cat.

Feliway Spray-applied twice a day in the area that he has soiled will deter him from wanting to urinate there

Feliway Diffuser - is a plug in that creates a reassuring scent in his 'safe haven' and so reduces stress.

When using diffusers it is important to use enough diffusers to cover for the area of the house (ie follow the manufactures directions)

A recent study was conducted involving 57 households with urine spraying cats. Feliway spray was used twice a day on the urine marked areas for a one month period. In one-third of households, urine marking stopped completely. In 57% of the households, urine marking was reduced, and in 9.3% of households marking was unchanged. Feliway has to be used diligently twice daily for a month to have this effect.

Sometimes medication is required to control an anxiety disorder.

As mentioned above some cats have a medical problem. Feline lower urinary tract disease FLUTD (also called "Feline Idiopathic Cystitis") is an inflammatory condition of the bladder lining and involves straining to urinate, genital licking/discomfort, bloody urine, and sometimes urinating in unusual places. There are many causes for this syndrome including psychological stress.

Treatment of FLUTD often involves environmental modification to reduce stress, dietary changes and encouraging frequent voiding and where appropriate the use medications. Treatment of this problem requires veterinary management including patient examination and analysis of urine samples as well as other diagnostics as appropriate.

So what do I need to do?

If you think your cat has a medical problem we need to see him.

If not, you can implement the behavioral & environmental strategies as outlined above. Feliway is available over the counter from us. Some owners prefer us to rule out FLUTD from the outset in which case we would need to see your cat sooner rather than later.

If you have implemented the strategies above and not getting anywhere then we will need to see your cat to rule out FLUTD - ask our staff for an appointment for the vet to check him. We can provide a kit that allows the vast majority of cat owners to obtain a urine sample from their cats litter tray at home - it is best to obtain this kit prior to your appointment as analysis of the urine will be required.

And finally,

As you can see this is a fairly complex subject if you have any questions please feel free to call us.

Some useful online references www.veterinarypartner.com www.feliway.com