



Managing Cats and Indoor Urination



Reasons why cats mess in the home:

- 1) **Cystitis** - Bladder infections are common in older cats. When they need to go to the toilet, they may not have the time to go outside or reach a litter tray. They can pass small puddles of urine which are often smelly and may contain blood. Cats with cystitis require medical treatment, so if your cat is showing these signs, it will need a check-up at the vets.
- 2) **Territory problems** - Cats are naturally independent and like their own space. This includes outside areas which they can mark as their own i.e. favourite sunning spots or hunting grounds. This is most often not just their own gardens, usually neighbours gardens as well. Cats territories can range over a few miles. Cats mark their territory by spraying all around the area, which is a completely natural behaviour for cats to perform, whether they are male or female, and neutered or entire. It is a marker to any other cats who want to settle in the area, that if they cross the line, conflict may occur. Problems with cats marking in a house can be a result of conflict outside which has reduced a cat's territory to a stressful level. In most cases it occurs when a bigger or stronger cat has moved into the area and caused your cat to be anxious and mark a much smaller area (generally your house) more vigorously to warn the intruder off.

How to deal with territory issues:

- 1) Cat flaps should only be available for your cat to use. A strange cat entering into another cat's house will automatically upset a resident adult cat.
- 2) Clean the soiled areas with stain/odour digesters i.e. odour eliminator or non-biological washing powder. Cats tend to soil the same areas by smelling where they have previously scented. Urine is high in ammonia which is what attracts them to the same place. Most household disinfectants have ammonia in them, so are not suitable to use. Odour digesters and washing powder break down ammonia and therefore reduce the likelihood of the cat soiling in the same area again.
- 3) Ensure clean litter trays are available in the area prone to being scented by your cat.
- 4) Feline pheromone sprays and plug-in's such as Feliway can be used to reduce stress and anxiety levels, therefore reducing the need for territory marking.
- 5) Mood-modulating treatment such as Ovarid or Zylkene can be used in the short-term to break chronic

long-term habits alongside environmental changes. These are available only from veterinary practices after a consultation.

Multi-cat households

- Environmental changes : give cats different routes to pass each other in narrow spaces. This is where most conflict occurs and by putting chairs or stools to allow different heights, they can pass without coming face-to-face.



- Feed cats at opposite ends of the room to allow space between them, but still enjoy the eating experience with the other cat present.

- Allow the most anxious cat to have its own space where it can be alone, i.e. a bedroom where the other cat is not allowed.
- Put litter trays down at different places in the house and clean them frequently
- Use pheromones or mood modulators (as described above).

3) Toileting Issues

Cats recognise a specific cat litter or surface from an early age. If you change the type of litter used this can result in them urinating or defecating elsewhere. Consider what type of litter you use and where it is situated.

Cats are private animals and do not like to be disturbed in a personal moment. Corridors and kitchens are a frequent place to put litter trays but not the most desirable for cats. Think about where litter trays are positioned in the house. Cats only like clean litter trays, and do not like to eat food next to a litter tray.

If your cat has started to toilet in an inappropriate area, then limiting the access to these areas is a good start. Put several litter trays out in different areas with different types of litter in to determine which is preferable. Once this is established, you can limit the number of trays required and keep the type of litter they favour.