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## INAPPROPRIATE URINATION IN CATS

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STRUGGLING TO FIGURE OUT WHY YOUR CAT IS HAVING ISSUES IN THE LITTER BOX?

If there's one thing cat owners can count on, it's the consistency of the litter box. We often visit with concerned and frustrated clients who describe their cat as straining to urinate, urinating in unusual places and/or having discolored (even bloody) urine. A cat with lower urinary tract disease may have some or even all of these, as almost any inflammatory condition in the feline lower urinary tract creates the same signs. Tumor, infection, bladder stone, etc. all form the same clinical picture.

In cats of ALL AGES with lower urinary tract symptoms, we find that the AVERAGE AGE IS 4 YEARS, and here is what we see:

- 50% will not have a cause that can be determined despite extensive testing (aka idiopathic cystitis or FIC)
- 20% will have bladder stones (females have a slightly higher incidence)
- 20% will have a urethral blockage
- 1-5% will have a true urinary tract infection
- 1-5% will have a urinary tract cancer
- 1-5% will have had trauma to the urinary tract (have been hit by a car, etc.)
- 1-5% will have both a bladder stone and an infection

In cases where cats are 10 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER, a different statistical picture emerges:

- 66% will be in some stage of kidney failure
- 50% will have true urinary tract infections
- 10% will have bladder stones
- 17% will have both infection and bladder stones
- 7% will have urethral blockage
- 3% will have urinary tract cancer
- 5% will not have a cause that can be determined despite extensive testing (aka FIC)
- 5% will have urinary incontinence

Feline Idiopathic Cystitis (FIC) is the most common cause of urinary disorders in cats.

It simply is urinary bladder inflammation without a known cause. Recent studies of FIC point to the importance of stress reduction and environmental enrichment, as it seems the nervous system, adrenal glands (think "fight or flight" hormone production) and urinary bladder are all involved. In managing cats with FIC we aim to a) decrease pain, b) decrease stress, and c) increase water consumption. We offer pain relief in the form of oral and/or injectable medications. Decreasing stress is mostly achieved by environmental enrichment at home. Litter box cleanliness and availability are key. Have at least one litter box per cat in your household. Keep it scooped at least once daily and sanitized at least once weekly. Access to more than one location of fresh food and water in a multi-cat household can be helpful. Petting, grooming, and play activities that stimulate hunting behavior are highly encouraged. Discover what type of toy (prey) your cat responds to and engage him/her in play. Increase your cat's access to private areas especially if there are other pets in the home. For water consumption, consider adding a drinking fountain as an option. Add canned tuna juice or chicken broth to your cat's water, and if he/she is eating only dry food, we recommend transitioning to a high quality canned variety or at least offering canned food in addition to the dry kibble.

Urethral blockages in cats are life-threatening emergencies.

"Blocked cat" is the term you will probably hear and read about most commonly. The urethra in the male cat is short and narrow, and it takes only something the size of a grain of salt to obstruct ("block") the flow of urine. Usually these are small stones made up of tiny urinary crystals. Once the blockage occurs, the pet cannot urinate, but the bladder continues to fill with urine. The bladder becomes larger and larger and may rupture. In addition, toxins build-up in the blood stream since they are not being eliminated (peed out), causing your pet to feel very sick, in addition to being in pain. Vomiting, lethargy, malaise, and not eating are the most common symptoms seen by owners. Upon arrival to the hospital, our veterinary team will discuss with you the need for emergency intervention to "un-block" the urethra and stabilize the metabolic and life-threatening crisis that your pet is facing. 