



## Identifying urination problems in cats



– Based upon a true story....

## The Scenario

I recently moved into a share house. My flatmate has two cats that had ownership of my room. Sunning themselves on the window sill and chasing insects that snuck through the vent on the wall was their idea of life. It was no longer. Warming to them was easy. As an animal lover, I found myself rubbing their bellies when they rolled over and playing 'hide and go seek' behind the couch. Often I would get a cheeky swipe of the paw on my face when I least expected it.

One night I came home from work very tired. All I wanted to do was fall asleep. My bedroom door was left open. I wanted the cats to know that they still belonged in my room. A waft of cat urine hit the sensory nerves of my nasal cavity. Was it the kitty litter in the bathroom? Was it on the floor in my room? Fatigued and not concerned, I was soon fast asleep dreaming about the white sands of a tropical island.

Waking at 6am to my alarm I turned on my bedside lamp. My eyes stayed clamped but my sense of smell was in overdrive. I could still smell cat urine. I rolled over and opened my eyes with my head on the pillow. A puddle of wee right under my nose...

## The problem

The misconception of cats being 'revengeful' was thought of in my case while I was scrubbing my mattress clean. With further research I was to realise that cats eliminate their waste outside of the litter box for numerous reasons:

1. Medical causes: Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD).  
We as humans function are like cats in that we both eliminate waste products from our blood through the kidneys and out from the bladder. We often get diagnosed with 'kidney stones', cystitis (inflammation) of the bladder, and we both can function on just half of one kidney!  
In cats, sometimes the formation of crystals within the bladder results in FLUTD causing: inflammation, urinary bleeding and straining, and sometimes life-threatening obstruction to the normal flow of urine out of the bladder. This can be lethal to your fluffy feline friend!
2. Behavioural causes: frustration, stress, or anxiety, and litter tray issues.  
Changes to routine, a new household member (human or animal), or relocation to a new environment are all triggers for inappropriate urination in cats. The most common result is often a dirty litter tray. Cats like a clean environment to do their 'businesses'. I think of it as 'going to

a public toilet after a cyclone'. I would avoid it completely! The litter tray may be in an area that the cat does not like to use it (e.g., a curious puppy may terrorise them when using it).



The litter tray may be hard to climb into for older cats that may have arthritis.

## The behaviour

In the case of FLUTD behaviour; inappropriate urination in places other than the litterbox or normal elimination areas, increased licking at the genital region, straining, frequent attempts at urination with crying or vocalisation, and blood in the urine. Cats often lose their appetites and become more irritable

as well. More seriously, male cats suffering from partial or complete obstruction of the urethra can exhibit vomiting, intense lethargy, and a distended, painful abdomen.

In the case of frustration, stress, anxiety, and litter tray aversion; urination in all other areas of your home other than the litter tray may equate. Cats will 'mark' their territory by lifting their tails and spraying urine on to vertical surfaces.

## The Solution

If you suspect your cat is expressing symptoms of Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease, contact Dr. Rebecca at Vetcall. This behaviour can be life threatening to your cat. She will provide you with expert knowledge, testing, and medication to enhance the urinary functioning of your cat.

Clean the litter tray regularly, if not daily. Use a non-scented kitty litter. Try textures such as, a clumping or non-clumping litter on your cat. It is like using a quality toilet paper in our case! Find an area where your cat likes to do their businesses. Keep the tray away from areas where dogs can get to them as they will not use the litter.

Using natural remedies you can buy at your local pet store such as 'Feliway' as a diffuser or spray. Cats have natural pheromones in their cheek glands that they rub on familiar objects in the house to mark their own territory. The product Feliway mimics these pheromones in a natural way to help prevent or control anxiety related behaviours to ensure cats feel they are in a safe and calming environment.

Plug the diffuser into a socket where the inappropriate urination is occurring. It should be left on for a four week period. To support the diffuser at home, use the Feliway spray on prominent objects around the house daily. There is also medication available from your veterinarian which helps reduce anxiety levels and helps your cat cope with new situations. It needs to be used for at least a few months before the full effects can be seen.

Think like your cat and what it would be like to go to the unpleasant toilet. You may wake with a surprising puddle beside your nose one morning yourself!

By Mark Ryan