

Feline Urine Marking

- Feline urine marking is a normal form of communication between cats.
- Cats mark with urine to claim their territory.
- Urine marking occurs most commonly in male cats that have not been neutered.
- A cat that is urine marking typically stands upright with its tail erect, and sprays a small amount of liquid on walls and other vertical surfaces.
- A diagnosis is made once other medical and behavioral reasons for urinating outside the litterbox have been ruled out.
- Neutering or spaying the cat is the most effective treatment.
- Treatment also may include methods to reduce stress in the cat's environment and/or anti-anxiety medications.

What Is Feline Urine Marking?

Feline urine marking is a behavior in which cats mark a location with urine to notify other cats of their territory. Often it occurs near door and windows as a way to communicate to neighborhood tomcats wandering through the yard. Although this is a normal behavior in cats, most owners consider it unacceptable when it occurs in the house. Any cat can exhibit marking behaviors, but it tends to occur in male cats that have not been neutered.

Although hormones may be behind urine marking, stress and anxiety also are causes. Any changes in the household, such as the addition of other pets, workers in the house, or a recent vacation by the owner, may compel the cat to reassert its territory.

What Are The Signs Of Urine Marking?

A cat that is urine marking typically stands upright with its tail erect, and sprays a small amount of liquid on walls and other vertical surfaces. This is different than a cat that is simply urinating outside the box, and not attempting to mark its territory. In those cases, the cat will squat, and eliminate urine on a horizontal surface. Occasionally, a marking cat

may spray on horizontal surfaces, such as bedding or laundry.

How Is Urine Marking Diagnosed?

Your veterinarian will probably want to check a urine sample to make sure that your cat doesn't have a medical reason for urinating outside the litterbox. If the urinary tract is inflamed, infected, or irritated by urinary crystals, there are treatments that can relieve the signs and encourage the cat to return to the litterbox. Some other medical conditions, such as bladder stones, diabetes, and kidney disease, also can cause a cat to urinate outside the litterbox. Your veterinarian may recommend additional tests, such as blood work and x-rays, to investigate these and other possibilities.

There may be other reasons why your cat is eliminating outside the litterbox. Cats are fastidious creatures, and may avoid the box if it is not clean enough, if they don't like the scent or texture of the

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litter, or if the box is located near a high traffic area in the house. Again, in these cases, the cat is usually urinating on horizontal surfaces, rather than on vertical surfaces.

Once other causes of inappropriate elimination are ruled out, a diagnosis of feline urine marking may be made.

How Is Urine Marking Treated?

The most effective treatment for urine marking is to neuter or spay your cat, if it has not been done already. Ninety percent of male cats stop marking once they have been neutered.

Behavior and Training

Reducing stress in the cat's environment may help, as well. Synthetic pheromone products are available from your veterinarian in spray or plug-in diffuser forms. These products have a calming effect on many cats.

To discourage neighborhood cats from approaching doors and windows, consider using a spray

deterrent that is activated by motion detectors.

You also should supply your cat a place to escape from children or other pets in the household, such as a room, cubby, or perch. If all else fails, ask your veterinarian if anti-anxiety medications may be appropriate for your pet.