

Recently at Angels of Assisi we had two beautiful Russian Blue cats returned to us because the cats were "...marking all over the house." Anyone working in the veterinary field knows inappropriate urination is a Red Flag telling the doctor to perform a simple urinalysis to check for urinary tract infection. As expected, the test turned up much blood and infection. As a matter of fact there was so much blood that when one of the cats urinated, I literally saw red.

Many people falsely believe their cats urinate around the house because they are bad, mad or stubborn. The majority of the time cats only urinate out of the box because of a MEDICAL REASON! Instead of taking a trip to the local veterinarian for a work up and proper treatment, many, many cats are dropped off at municipal shelters by frustrated owners. Since most shelters cat euthanasia rates are as high as 90%, a potentially simple problem to care for winds up in the death of an otherwise fine animal. Even more unlucky are the cats that are thrown outside to fend for themselves while suffering from painful untreated urinary tract disease.

There are many reasons a cat may urinate inappropriately. This may include a simple urinary tract infection, urinary calculi (stones) or crystals, sterile cystitis, bladder cancer, the spraying of an intact male or female in heat and stress related issues.

What to do if your cat begins urinating outside the box:

- 1) Ask yourself if there has been any changes or source of stress that occurred at the same time the cat's behavior changed IE: new animals or people in the household, construction in the house, changes in food, divorce, moving, etc.
- 2) First of all, see your veterinarian for some simple tests and an evaluation. Some issues are treated easily with antibiotics while others may be more complicated.
- 3) Make sure you have multiple litter boxes available. The rule of thumb is 1 litter box per cat... plus one. So if you have two cats you should have 3 litter boxes.
- 4) Try different types of litter, hooded or un-hooded litter boxes or a move of the litter box: CATS ARE SO FINICKY! Also watch your cats at the box. Make sure one cat is not picking on the others at the box. The low man could be getting beat up every time s/he is trying to use it. Thus your cat will pee anywhere else.
- 5) Watch your cat's behavior. Is he straining to urinate, licking his/her private parts, or just avoiding the box because he associates the litter box with pain?
- 6) CLEAN YOUR LITTERBOX! That is right. EVERYDAY. Cats like to be clean.
- 7) Clean all the areas your cat has "marked" outside the box very well to remove any scent of urine
- 8) Try restricting the cat to a small room with a clean litter box to re-train her to the appropriate way to use the box
- 9) Add Feliway (feline facial pheromone), which helps cats relax and deters them from urinating or defecating in the space when they smell this pheromone.

The bottom line is, cats are not trying to get back at their owners when they "mark". They aren't acting out or being bad. Chances are they are trying to get their owners attention. They are saying something like, "I hurt and I want you to notice so you can make me feel better." It is likely that is a real medical problem causing physical pain and a lesser likelihood that stress or change could be causing some emotional pain manifesting as inappropriate urination. One sure thing is these cats don't always need to be booted outside as the answer to our problem.