

WOODVALE PARK

VETERINARY HOSPITAL



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INDOOR TOILETING PROBLEMS

Cats usually learn to go to the toilet in a litter tray when they are kittens, and can easily adapt to using outside as their toilet. However, sometimes they lapse in this training, and begin to urinate and/or poo inside the house. The occasional mistake is normal, but if it persists, it can be due to a behaviour problem due to some kind of change or anxiety in their life. Their may be a new person or animal in the house which has upset them, a family member may have left or passed away, they may have been moved to a new house or the existing house may have been renovated, some very sensitive cats may not even like it when the household furniture has been moved around.

The cat is therefore usually feeling insecure or threatened, and is trying to boost his or her own presence, or the anxiety they are feeling is driving them to make mistakes inside. Because owners provide security, mistakes are rarely witnessed. The wet smelly deposits are discovered some time later !

Urinating is a different behaviour from urine spraying where the cat stands with tail upright and quivering at the tip, often accompanied by a stepping movement with the back legs and the spray is directed backwards. Whereas urinating is conducted from a squatting position in the litter tray or outdoors in soil. If you think your cat may be urine spraying (not just doing normal toileting indoors), then please aski for the handout regarding spraying.

If signs of discomfort are observed when toileting such as crying out or urinating frequently, or if any blood is observed, the cat should be examined by a Veterinary Surgeon immediately. They may be making these toileting mistakes because of a medical reason, NOT a behavioural one.

Once any medical conditions have been resolved, these suggestions may help.

TREATMENT :

1. Cats should never be punished for toileting in the wrong place, even if caught in the act as this will further any insecurity and make the occurrence more likely.
2. If changes have been made to the interior of the house or there have been changes in personnel, the cat should be denied access to most areas unless supervised. Changed rooms should be explored with the owners present until the cat recognises the area as part of his or her territory again.
3. Sprayed areas should be thoroughly cleaned with a warm solution of biological washing powder or liquid (with "enzymes"). Odour removers are also available to use – eg) "Urine-Off" Available at the clinic – and sometimes a solution of vinegar and water sponged onto the area can help. Owners should check that such cleaning does not remove dyes from fabric by testing a corner first. The area should be allowed to dry completely and the cat only allowed back to it initially under supervision. Cleaning with ammonia or bleach based products should be avoided, as these can actually smell like urine to pets. Thorough cleaning and odour removing is essential, as cats have a sense of smell much greater than ours, and although we can no longer smell an odour they can !
4. If the cat has access to the outdoors via a cat flap this should be locked shut and the cat let in and out by the owners. Cat flaps destroy the security of the indoors and could allow other cat rivals in to

compete with the occupant, where he or she should feel safest. If the mistakes stop following this measure, a selective cat flap might be installed later if more convenient. With these, the cat wears an electronic or magnetic key on a collar, which releases the flap lock and only allows access for the wearer.

5. Confining the cat in an indoor pen or one small room for short periods when unsupervised indoors will provide a more predictable area and help the cat feel more secure. A warm covered bed should be provided. As well as being protected by the bars of the pen, the cat will also be unwilling to toilet near its bed as keeping the sleeping area clean and dry is a principle firmly established at only a few weeks of age. If confined for more than 2 to 3 hours a litter tray should be available, sited well away from food and the bed. If the cat uses the litter tray only, then he or she can be allowed access to the rest of the house one room at a time, with owners remembering to supervise first opportunities in each room. The aim is for the cat to perceive the house as a steadily increasing safe – rest-feeding zone, shared with protective owners.
6. Cats rarely toilet near their food so small tubs of dry cat food can be placed at persistently used sites to act as deterrents. Dry food is more hygienic than canned diets for this purpose and will help even if the cat is usually fed canned or fresh meat diet. The dry food should be stuck to the bottom of a container or covered in Glad Wrap to prevent the cat from eating it. Placing uncomfortable walking surfaces such as trays of pinecones or sheets of tin foil may also deter the cat from toileting at some sites that they are repeatedly soiling.

The speed and success of treatment may be assisted greatly by the use of certain medications. This option should be discussed with the Veterinary Surgeon.

NEWS FLASH !!

There is now a new product called “Feliway”, this is a spray or a plug in diffuser made up of synthetic cat facial pheromones which is very effective in stopping and preventing cats from soiling in your house. Pheromones are a natural substance cats secrete in order to feel secure via rubbing their faces on objects, depositing facial pheromones.

Another new medication is “Clomicalm”, which is an anti-anxiety tablet. This has a calming effect and is effective at stopping unwanted soiling while ‘re-training’ the unsociable behaviour.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT “FELIWAY” AND “CLOMICALM” PLEASE CONTACT US