

Urine Marking (Spraying) In Cats

Urine marking (spraying) is a normal feline behavior that is quite unacceptable in our homes. Cats urine mark primarily to advertise their presence to other cats and to establish and maintain territories. The most common triggers for urine marking include a new cat in the household, free-roaming cats outside, or social conflict between family cats. However, other events such as a visitor to the home, new furniture, or unfamiliar odors can also trigger urine marking. Sometimes cats urine mark if they are frustrated, such as when they are denied access to outside or haven't gotten enough attention from the owner. Additionally, an anxious or fearful cat may urine mark to surround itself with a familiar scent.

Urine marking is much more common in un-neutered males however females also urine mark. Neutering your male cat is the first thing you should try, however, a certain percentage of neutered cats continue to spray following the surgery.

The following list will give you some suggestions for dealing with urine marking. Many chronic spraying problems however, are difficult to eliminate. Management may be your best bet.

1. Make sure you clean all affected areas well with an enzymatic cleaner that neutralizes the odor. As long as there is an olfactory cue (the smell of the urine) the cat will continue to spray. Anti-Icky-Poo is the best product to use.
2. Restrict access to all sprayed areas until they are properly treated with the neutralizer.
3. Make the area less attractive to the cat using items like aluminum foil, sticky paper, sandpaper, or a carpet runner with the nubby side up.
4. Use aversive smells in the area such as menthol, floral perfumes, oil of wintergreen, or citrus.
5. Change the significance of the area by feeding the cat there or providing catnip, toys and treats.
6. Spray the synthetic facial pheromone FELIWAY in the area. Because cats also mark with their facial glands, providing this olfactory cue may cause the cat to switch to a different marking strategy.

7. Provide a "spray pan" - an L-shaped litterbox configuration to redirect spraying to a more appropriate place.
8. If the spraying is a response to cats outside you should cover the windows and discourage the neighboring cats from coming into the yard.
9. If spraying is a response to social conflict with other cats in the household you need to work on improving the relationship between the cats. Make all of their associations positive using treats, affection and play.
10. Provide an "environment of plenty" by creating multiple feeding areas, multiple elimination areas and multiple sleeping perches at different vertical heights throughout the house.
11. Natural Calming Remedies - Rescue Remedy, Composure calming chews, and Feliway calming pheromone can all help reduce anxiety.
12. Provide daily enrichment for all of the cats but especially the sprayer. Enrichment involves stimulating the cat's brain and encouraging natural behaviors. Placing the cats food inside feeder balls or puzzle feeders works well. Equally stimulating is hiding the cats food around the house for him/her to hunt for. Playing with your cat is also wonderful enrichment. Placing a bird feeder outside the window for your cat to watch can give your cat hours of enrichment.
13. Allowing your cat safe outdoor time can also help prevent spraying in the house. A safe way to do this is building a fenced in area for the cat. The Purrfect Cat fence company sells cat specific fencing that is easy to install.
14. There are medications that may help control urine marking in your cat. The suggestions above should be attempted before considering medication. If you feel that you have tried everything and the problem still persists, consult your veterinarian about drug therapy. It is often the case however, that the cat will cease spraying while on the drug, but will revert to the behavior once the medication is stopped.