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Does Your Cat Pee Outside the Litter Box Due to Pandora's Syndrome?

Indoor cats experience behavioral stress from many sources:

- Small territories compared to outdoor cats, who may have a 3 mile range.
- Housemates they didn't pick.
- Can see outdoor cats but can't interact with them.
- Don't have their time and attention spent on hunting.
- Limited resources for litter boxes, drinking and eating locations, resting places.
- Other illnesses/ health conditions they may have (and may be hiding.)

While people may have stress headaches, back pain, or stomach upset from stress, **cats have bladder pain, spasm, and blood in the urine. They go outside the box because of burning and urgency.**

{It really is NOT because they are angry with you. I promise.}

Other causes of urinary signs include crystals in the urine, urinary stones, infection, liver disease, and pain from problems such as arthritis, dental disease, and urinary cancer.

Checking a urine sample is critical to making the correct diagnosis. Other helpful tests can include blood tests, x-rays, and ultrasound.

Treatment: How can we decrease stress ?

- Provide more options for food, water, litter boxes, and elevated resting places to decrease competition between cats. Cats use “situational dominance,” which means they do not have a rigid pecking order, but rather compete over the stuff they want at that particular moment.
- Use pheromones to make cats feel more secure in their territory, your home. Feliway diffusers treat 700 sq feet. I have seen no benefit from the herbal “calming” collars made by Sentry.
- Improve moisture intake with canned food, more water bowl locations, and fountains.
- Exercise and mental stimulation: divide dry food into 6 portions and hide it all over the home so that your cat has to hunt for it. Institute play time twice a day, rotating between mouse toys, feather toys, and balls and laser pointers. Put those toys away the rest of the time so they stay fresh and interesting.
- Tempt your cat back to the litter box with Dr. Elsey’s Cat Attract. Make sure you have 1 box per cat, plus an extra. Scoop boxes daily, dump and wash with soap weekly. Do not bleach litter boxes. What is the perfect litter? Whatever your cats like, but in general unscented is better and most cats do not like covered boxes.
- If your cat has urinated outside the box, clean that area with enzymatic cleaner. You may need to pull back the carpet to inspect the pad and subfloor. Subfloor or concrete can be painted with the same type of sealants made to deal with mold. Soiled rug pad must be replaced. If an spot has been used multiple times, block access by closing doors, moving furniture, or covering the area with something your cat will not want to walk on such as foil, a shower curtain liner, or bubble wrap.
- If your cat is freaking out about outdoor cats, there are harmless repellants sold at hardware stores. Motion-activated sprinklers can also send them out of your yard. If necessary, place bottom-up blinds or opaque film on the lower portion of the window. We can provide contact information for local groups that manage feral cats.
- Many cats are much happier with outdoor access. Options include fenced yard, cat enclosures, screened porches, balconies, and sunrooms, and harness and leash exercise.

- In some cases, antianxiety medication may be needed, typically for 4-6 months. There are also calming nutritional approaches we can try.