

House soiling in cats
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Housesoiling behavior is the broad category that can be divided into a toileting issue or urine marking. Each behavior has unique causes and treatment methodology therefore, they must be distinguished from each other. Cats that are toileting often have found a more desirable location in which to eliminate whereas urine marking cats are using their urine (and sometimes feces) to communicate.

Here are some common causes and potential treatments for housesoiling in cats:

Causes:

1. **Medical Issues:** Urinary tract infections, bladder stones, kidney disease, or other medical conditions can lead to house soiling. It's important to rule out any underlying medical causes through a thorough examination and appropriate diagnostic tests. This is most common with toileting cats.
2. **Litter Box Aversion:** Cats may develop aversions to their litter boxes due to various reasons such as inadequate cleanliness, inappropriate litter substrate, and the size of the box. This aversion can lead to a substrate preference or location preference or aversion. This is most common with toileting cats.
3. **Stress or Anxiety:** Cats may exhibit house soiling as a response to stress or anxiety in their environment. Changes in the household, new pets, conflict with other cats, or a lack of environmental enrichment can contribute to stress-related house soiling. Environmental stressors can lead to urine marking in cats and toileting issues.
4. **Territorial Marking:** Unneutered male cats or even some spayed or neutered cats may engage in territorial marking behavior, which involves spraying urine to mark their territory. Cats are territorial by nature.
5. **Separation-related Behaviors:** A percentage of cats may house soil due to separation related behaviors such as isolation distress, hyper-attachment or other co-morbidities (generalized anxiety, noise aversions, and fear-based behaviors).

Treatments:

1. **Examination:** If housesoiling occurs, it's crucial to first rule out any underlying medical issues through an examination and appropriate diagnostic tests. A urinalysis and urine culture are critical. Treating any medical conditions can resolve or improve the housesoiling behavior.
2. **Litter Box Management:** Ensure that the litter box is clean, accessible, and appealing to the cat. Scoop the litter box at least once a day and provide a litter substrate that the cat prefers. Some cats may prefer open boxes, while others may prefer covered boxes. Providing multiple litter boxes in different areas of the house can also help. Make sure the box is large enough for the cat to turn around without touching the sides. For cats that eliminate next to the box, evaluate for orthopedic disease and provide a low sided box.

3. **Behavior Modification:** Behavior modification techniques aim to address the underlying causes of housesoiling and modify the cat's behavior. This involves identifying specific triggers and behavior modification. This is most successful in the treatment of Urine Marking.
4. **Environmental Enrichment:** Providing environmental enrichment and reducing stressors in the cat's environment can help alleviate housesoiling. This includes providing adequate playtime, interactive toys, scratching posts, hiding and vertical spaces for the cat to feel secure and mentally stimulated.
5. **Stress Reduction:** If stress or anxiety is a contributing factor, identifying and addressing the stressors is important. This may involve creating a calm and predictable environment, providing hiding spots, and pheromone therapy (such as synthetic feline facial pheromones). Relationships between household cats should be evaluated and providing a safe room for each cat (or cat pair) in addition to a communal room helps to reduce environmental stressors.
6. **Neutering/Spaying:** For cats engaged in territorial marking behavior, neutering or spaying can often help reduce or eliminate this behavior.
7. **Cleaning and Odor Elimination:** It's essential to thoroughly clean any areas where housesoiling has occurred to remove lingering odors that may attract the cat to eliminate there again. Enzymatic cleaners specifically designed for pet stains and odors can be effective.
8. **Medications:** Medications such as fluoxetine and venlafaxine can be useful in the treatment of urine marking in cats. These same medications are less effective when treating toileting behaviors.

The diagnosis and treatment of housesoiling in cats involves the identification of the true motivator for the behavior. A thorough physical examination should always be completed along with any other diagnostics that seem appropriate. Medications and environmental management are key to the treatment of these cats.