

Feline Urinary Syndrome

Urinary problems are common in cats and have various causes. We will try to present the most frequent pathologies, as well as some advice to help with prevention.

Symptoms

Whatever the origin of the disease, the symptoms are always those of an inflammation of the bladder or cystitis: Your cat is calmer, frequently licks its genital area. It goes to the litter box often and appears constipated. If it succeeds, there is pain when urinating; it urinates frequently, in small quantities, sometimes tinged with blood. It may also go outside its litter box, for example in a cooler place (bath, sink, tiles) or even in your bed...

It is important to always perform at least a urinalysis to determine its origin. In certain cases, x-rays, a blood test, a urine culture, or even a biopsy may be suggested.

For certain pathologies, this can go as far as an obstruction, which will have a severe impact on its general condition: apathy (extreme weakness), prostration, no urine emission, anorexia... This state is serious because it can lead to kidney failure and rapidly the death of the animal. It is therefore an **EMERGENCY**.

Causes

1- Struvite or Calcium Oxalate Stones

A. Struvites

What are called struvite crystals form in the urine of cats, most often before 6 years of age, but can also occur later. The risk factors are:

- A mineral content that is too high in the diet,
- A urinary pH that is too high,
- A production of concentrated urine,
- Lack of exercise as well as obesity,
- The presence of a chronic urinary tract infection.

B. Calcium oxalates

Calcium oxalates are another type of urinary crystals, which can also form stones in the bladder, or uroliths. They have shown a significant progression since the 80s due to the use of overly "aggressive" acidifying diets, which cause an increase of calcium in the urine.

At-risk breeds are Persians, Himalayens, domestic long-haired cats, Maine Coons, and Exotic Shorthairs. **Males** are more at risk than females, as well as cats over 6 years old. The risk factors are relatively identical to those for struvites.

C. Treatment of urinary stones

Stones are detected either by x-ray or ultrasound. Urinary crystals are detected during a urinary microscopy analysis. Treatment is done in different ways. It will require:

- The primary treatment is to change the food to a "prescription" food specially formulated to dissolve these crystals. There is no therapy for dissolving oxalate stones.

- Only mechanical removal is possible, most often surgical.
- Keep the urinary pH below 6.4 throughout the day.
- Dilute the cat's urine by making it drink as much as possible, for example by using a water fountain.
- Increase exercise.
- Maintain the litter box clean, accessible, and in a "comfortable" place so that your cat goes regularly.

The risk of recurrence is difficult to determine but should be fairly low if all these recommendations are applied and maintained.

2- Idiopathic Cystitis

A. Definition

Idiopathic cystitis is a feline urinary syndrome without a universal cause or treatment! Idiopathic cystitis is probably one of the most frequent causes of urinary problems in cats, but it is a complex problem, and the causes seem to be multiple... it is a real challenge for you, and us, veterinarians!

The risk factors are:

- Age: cats aged 1 to 10 years old
- Indoor cats - environment that is not stimulating enough, anxiety caused by cohabitation with other cats, stressful events, obligation to use the litter box
- Overly concentrated urine
- Obesity, lack of exercise
- Often linked to a nervous, irritable, or hyper-reactive temperament - stressed cat!

The signs are the same as in other conditions. This pathology usually does not cause urinary blockage. Diagnosis is made by eliminating other causes of urinary diseases.

B. Treatment

It will have different goals:

- Decrease the duration and severity of signs: pain management, enrich the environment
- Litter box modification: in number, in location, use of different substrates, covered and uncovered
- Introduce different games, especially prey simulations
- Places to climb, hide, and sleep without being disturbed; high observation posts
- Contacts with the outdoors (flower boxes, enclosures, harness)
- Modify the diet: prescription diets
- Dilute urine. Don't forget, Kitty must drink, drink, drink!

TO LEARN MORE... Use of soothing pheromones to decrease stress. Other treatments are experimental and could help: glycosaminoglycans, anti-depressants.