

Spraying Problems in Cats

Spraying or sometimes called marking, is when the cat backs up to an object and sprays a small amount of urine. The cat does not squat during this process but remains standing. The urine is deposited onto a vertical surface such as the side of a chair, curtain, door, wall, etc. If urine is deposited in a large puddle on the floor then it is considered to be litter box aversion and not spraying. See our other web page on litter box training if your cat is squatting and depositing a puddle on the floor.

Both intact males and females can spray. In fact, it is almost a guarantee that an unaltered feline will spray and they generally start at the onset of sexual maturity (about 7 months). Male cats as well will start to spray as they become sexually mature (7 months). By altering your cat you have an 80% chance of completely remedying the problem without taking further action! So start by altering your cats.

Possible Causes:

1. Cats visiting in the yard
2. New pet or new family member
3. Problems with a member of the household
4. Problems with another pet
5. Moving or remodeling
6. Visitors

Spraying in an altered animal is anxiety-related and can have several different causes. Anxiety can be created by situations such as a moving into a new home, new human family member (such as a new spouse, new boy/girl friend, new baby, newly adopted child, etc), addition of a new pet, outside stray cats invading territory, too high a feline population within the household itself, improper introduction of a new cat/pet, construction/remodeling in the household, aggression between cats in the household and so on. The solution lies in finding the source of anxiety and reducing it or eliminating it.

Reduce Household Tension

Do address any cat aggression problems you have in the household. This can be a major source of anxiety for many cats. Provide more places to hide and climb (vertical cat condos - floor to ceiling are the best) and multiple feeding stations so the cats do not have to confront each other in critical areas. Increase the cat in question's daily exercise. Exercise can help alleviate stress in cats just as it can in humans. If you have a multiple cat population in a small household, your house size may just be too small to be mentally healthy for some of the cats. Consider reducing the number of cats that you have OR increase the cat's living space (attach a screened-in patio or a cat enclosure to your house).

Reduce Territorial Intrusion

Just reducing the stray cat population around your cat's home can greatly reduce your pet's anxiety. If you have un-owned stray cats roaming your neighborhood, take responsibility and trap the cats. Find them new homes or turn them into a local shelter. Try installing a product called a "Scarecrow" to keep unwanted feline visitors from parading through your yards. A "Scarecrow" is a motion-activated sprinkler. It will turn on a spray of water when it detects motion within a certain range. It is very effective in teaching cats (and other critters) to avoid your yard.

Note:

Spraying behaviors can be an indication of various health problems. This possibility should be ruled out by a thorough examination by the veterinarian before a behavior modification is initiated.

Although spraying is generally thought to be motivated by territorial anxiety, it can be also be caused by other types of stress, such as stress created by a poor litterbox situation (e.g., dirty box, scented litter, bad location). The issue of proper litterbox maintenance should always be addressed when dealing with a spraying problem.