

PREVENTION

In order to prevent further occurrences it is important that cats are allowed free access outside for urination, or a safe, clean, private tray to urinate in indoors.

Monitoring for early signs of the disease is important. These may include over grooming the hind legs and abdomen areas, and pain, which may manifest as aggression.

Early detection of any sources of stress, providing wet food and ensuring plenty of access to fresh, clean drinking water at this stage may reduce the severity of symptoms. Always consult with your vet as soon as you notice any signs, as early intervention with medicines to relieve pain and inflammation should always be considered.



Summary

Feline lower urinary tract disease is a complex multifactorial problem which can be very frustrating to both you and your cat.

A thorough medical investigation, consideration of the role of stress and use of prescription diets can significantly improve the chances of good long term control.

Recurrence of the problem may be common and should always be treated promptly.

If you would like any further information please speak to a member of the veterinary staff at your practice.



XLVets Small Animal member veterinary practices work together to share experience, knowledge and ideas to ensure the highest levels of quality and care for their client's pets. XLVet member practices provide a compassionate and caring service for all pets and at the same time offer comprehensive and up-to-date treatment in all fields of veterinary medicine and surgery.

FELINE LOWER URINARY TRACT DISEASE (FLUTD)



FLUTD is a term used to describe a collection of conditions relating to the bladder and urethra in cats. There can be many contributing factors including bladder stones, anatomical defects, bacterial infections and behavioural problems. In most cases however it is not possible to identify an underlying cause so the problem is referred to as being idiopathic.

Signs and Symptoms

If your cat is suffering from FLUTD you may see some or all of the following signs:

- Difficulty or pain when urinating
- Urinating in abnormal locations
- Loss of litter tray training
- Blood in urine

The condition is often very distressing for the cat and as a result you may also see behavioural changes such as aggression and over grooming.

In male cats the urethra may block completely with a plug of inflammatory material or crystals. The cat may show repeated attempts to pass urine with no success and obvious discomfort.

What causes the disease?

It is currently thought that FLUTD is a result of inflammation of the bladder lining.

This can be associated with stress and local triggers within the bladder such as concentrated urine, stones, crystals or infection. Older cats often have diluted urine which can in some cases predispose them to urinary tract infections.

Why does the inflammation occur?

In a normal cat the bladder lining produces a thin protective layer of mucus called the glycosaminoglycan (GAG) layer. In some cats this has been found to be reduced, allowing irritant substances in the urine to cause inflammation of the bladder wall. A mixture of protein, crystals, blood and cells from the bladder wall can stick together and result in the development of a 'plug' which can completely block the urethra, stopping any urine outflow.

When the urethra is blocked the condition can be fatal and should be treated immediately!

FLUTD is more commonly found in

- Nervous or anxious cats
- Overweight middle aged cats
- Cats with little or no access to outside or inadequate litter tray availability
- Cats fed some dry foods

Diagnosis:

To determine the cause of FLUTD several tests are usually required. These may include:

- Blood tests to assess kidney function
- Urine tests to check for evidence of bladder stones or infection
- X-rays of the bladder and urinary tract to check for other diseases such as cancer, anatomical defects and bladder stones
- Ultrasound scan to look at the bladder wall and bladder contents



Stress Factors

If no physical cause can be found, an assessment of the cat's recent behaviour can be helpful. Cats hide their stress very well and they can be affected by what may seem to be very minor environmental changes.

These can include:

- Bad weather
- New additions to the family
- Family stress or visitors
- Presence of builders
- Being in a cattery
- Change of litter or litter tray position

TREATMENT

If your cat is suffering from a urinary blockage this is an emergency. They will need to be admitted, given an anaesthetic and the blockage relieved. This may necessitate hospitalisation for a few days until the vet is certain that the blockage has been cleared and that normal urination is possible.

In cases where there is no obstruction the treatment consists of a combination of the following;

- Pain relief to reduce inflammation and discomfort
- Dietary change – often to a canned/wet food. Your vet may suggest using a prescription diet
- Encouraging water intake by increasing the number of water bowls or the use of a water fountain.
- Addressing any stress issues. This may involve the use of pheromone products to reduce anxiety.
- Managing problems with the bladder GAG layer by using a GAG supplement.

In the majority of cases the condition will resolve within a few days but recurrences are common and if severe, other treatments to relieve urethral spasm or provide pain relief may be considered.