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TIPS TO HELP WITH A SPRAYING CAT

Dr. Rachel Malamed Shares Some Advice For This Stinky Problem:

Spraying should first be differentiated from inappropriate urination outside the box. These are distinct behaviors and there are differences in the way they are treated.

Spraying is a normal communicatory behavior that may be sexual (hormone related), territorial or stress related. When a cat sprays it is usually standing, backs up to a vertical surfaces and emits a stream of urine onto that surface. The tail tip twitches and the cat may tread with its back paws.

Spraying typically occurs on vertical surfaces (although some cats mark horizontally) and in socially significant areas such on windows, curtains or doorframes at the periphery of the home. It is also common for cats to mark on new objects (e.g. visitor's purse) that enter the home.

Inappropriate urination is different in that the cat is trying to void its bladder, the volume is usually larger and the cat urinates on horizontal surfaces while in a squatting position.

Triggers for spraying may include visiting wildlife or neighboring cats hanging out by windows/doors, fighting or competition between cats living in the house, other stressors (e.g. noises, harassing dog, new people/animals, etc.) in the home or a change in the cat's environment or owner's schedule. Sometimes a trigger is not obvious!

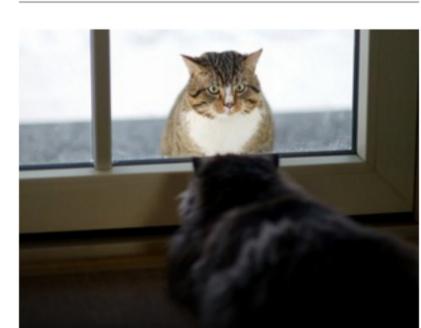
Whether the cat is spraying or inappropriately urinating outside the box, the first thing an owner should do upon finding urine in the home is to schedule a visit to the vet to rule out an underlying medical issue.

Here are my tips:

- 1. Neutering and spraying are extremely effective (90% for males and 95% for females) at reducing spraying in cats because of the strong hormonal influence. Spraying is most common in intact males. However, ten percent of neutered male cats and 5% of sprayed female cats will continue to spray. If your neutered male cat is spraying, visit your veterinarian and have him examined to ensure that he is in fact neutered!
- 2. Environmental management: Identify and reduce or other triggers in the environment. For example, if cats are visiting outside then cat beds can be moved away from those doors/areas, windows blocked or access to the area denied. Conflict between cats within the house can also be addressed but the risk of spraying increases with the number of cats in the home. Spraying can be triggered if a cat is stressed when stalked and attacked by another. Cats that do not have sufficient outlets for normal behaviors may be frustrated and this can trigger spraying.

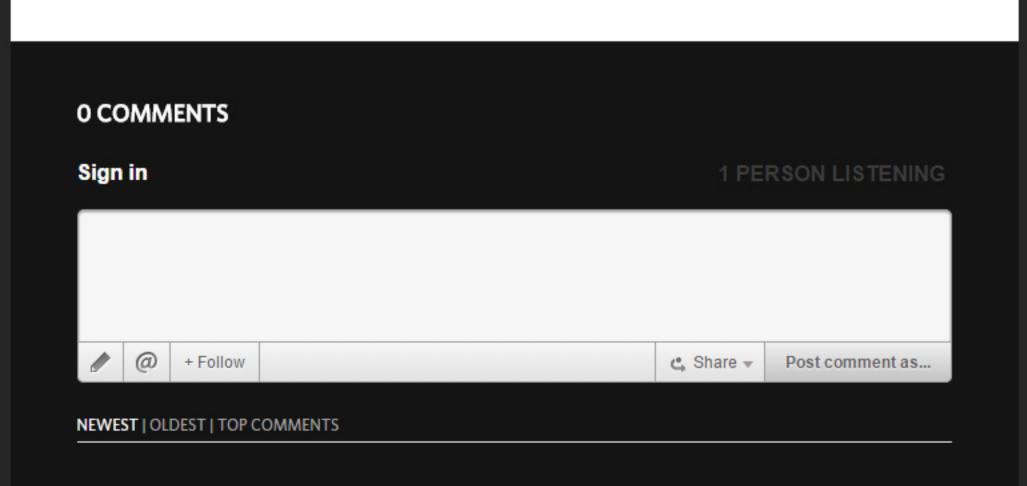
Do not use punishment if your cat sprays as this can exacerbate stress and cause the cat to be afraid of you.

WILD



Attack Cat

- 3. Targeted areas should be blocked so that the cat does not continue to visit the area and practice the behavior, which is self-reinforcing.
- 4. Cleaning: Find urine spots with black light. This will allow owner to monitor for new spots and track progress. Clean with an enymatic cleaner. Sometimes very soiled surfaces need to be completely removed. Litterbox hygiene can also help to improve urine spraying. Keep them clean by scooping every day and cleaning and changing the litter at least once every 1 to 2 weeks.
- 5. Enrichment or a "house of plenty" should be provided. This can help to reduce stress, satisfy normal behaviors and also reduce competition between cats. This entails adding more toys, perches, litter boxes, scratching posts, food bowls, food releasing toys, etc.
- 6. Other treatment options include Feliway or feline facial pheromones (synthetic analogs), which may help to reduce spraying in some cases. Scratching posts can be placed to encourage other forms of marking which include scratching behavior.
- 7. There are medications that may help to treat urine marking. Medications should be used in conjunction with addressing the underlying cause and employing environmental and behavior modification.



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