

Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD) is a syndrome primarily affecting indoor cats. It is characterized by frequency of urination, straining while urinating, presence of blood in the urine and urination outside the litter box.

FLUTD is unique to cats in that inflammation of the bladder develops without a concurrent infectious process. The cause of FLUTD is unknown. However, it is believed to be related to environmental stress since it occurs mostly in indoor cats.

FLUTD occurs episodically, with symptoms which last for 1 to 2 weeks. These episodes are most often self-limiting and resolve without intervention.

There is no cure for FLUTD. Management of this disorder consists of controlling pain during episodes and attempting to decrease the frequency of recurrences with environmental modification.

Environmental modification can be accomplished a number of ways. Proper litter box management is imperative. Place the litter box in a calm, quiet, easily accessible location. Clean the box daily and use unscented clumping litter. The number of litter boxes per home should equal the number of cats plus one.

Water intake is also an important management issue with FLUTD. Many cats do not like to drink from dishes and prefer to drink from faucets or pet drinking fountains. Others do not like the taste of tap water and prefer bottled water.

Water dishes should be cleaned regularly with a mild detergent. Other ways to increase water intake include feeding canned food and freezing tuna juice in ice trays and adding these cubes to water.

Also, cats vary in the amount of interaction with owners that they require with some cats requiring extra attention and others wanting more time alone.

It is also important to provide cats with environmental enrichment to prevent boredom, as boredom can lead to stress. Some examples of environmental enrichment are scratching posts, toys and perches that allow the cat to see outside.

It can be difficult to determine exactly what causes stress for cats. Each cat is different and each cat will respond to different stimuli in a different way.

FLUTD is a syndrome that is not completely understood, and it is important to understand that it is a life-long problem and there will be occasional flare-ups. Since there is no cure, treatment is aimed at reducing pain and decreasing the likelihood of recurrences.

This column is provided by the faculty of the OSU Boren Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital.

**My cat goes to the litter box frequently, could this be a lower urinary tract disease?**

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