

# INAPPROPRIATE URINATION

Pets may urinate where they're not supposed to for either **behavioral** or **medical** reasons. Behavior problems can be caused by a variety of things, but stress is usually a major factor. Medical reasons include urinary tract infection, sterile cystitis, bladder stones, cancer, metabolic disease (diabetes, kidney disease), and incontinence. In addition, problem urination may be caused by a combination of two or more of the above factors.

Diagnosis starts with collecting a urine sample. A lab urinalysis reveals the presence of many things in the urine, including the types of cells (red blood cells, white blood cells, skin cells), crystals, bacteria, urine concentration, and pH.

A urinary tract infection (UTI) occurs when bacteria grow in the bladder. A UTI can usually be treated with a course of antibiotics. The lab can run culture and sensitivity tests to determine what type of bacteria are present, and which antibiotics will be most effective. We recommend checking another urine sample after the course of antibiotics is completed to make certain the infection has cleared.

Crystals in the urine could indicate the presence of bladder stones. Diet can have a major impact on bladder stone formation. In most cases, an x-ray of the bladder can tell us if there are stones present. Depending on the number and size of stones, we may recommend surgical removal or a diet intended to dissolve the stones.

Sterile cystitis is an inflammation of the bladder when there is no infection present. Many things can contribute to sterile cystitis, including diet and lifestyle, although the exact cause is unknown. Sterile cystitis is treated with a combination of medications—usually steroids to reduce the inflammation and antibiotics to prevent infection in the compromised bladder. Sterile cystitis may be recurrent, and often it is a life-long condition. Prompt medical treatment when your pet shows signs is essential to controlling this disease.

With any of the above medical conditions, your pet may be placed on a special prescription diet. This diet is specially formulated to control urinary problems in several ways. It changes the pH of the urine, which makes it more difficult for bacteria to grow or crystals to form. It is low in certain minerals to prevent stone formation, and it has a high moisture content to keep the urine from getting too concentrated. Your pet should eat only the food recommended; mixing in other foods (or table scraps) will lessen the effectiveness of the diet and may cause recurrence of the urinary problems. The doctor will advise you how long to keep your pet on the prescription diet. *In many cases the diet should be fed for the life of your pet.*

Pets that have urinary problems are at risk for plugging (urinary obstruction). Plugging occurs when something (a blood clot, stone, or mucous plug) obstructs the urethra and prevents the pet from urinating. The urine builds up and the bladder becomes very full. If you notice your pet straining to urinate, or if the urine stream is very small, call the veterinary clinic immediately. Urinary obstruction is an emergency situation, and your pet needs to be seen as soon as possible.

Persistent problem urination can be frustrating; but once the cause is identified, steps can be taken to correct it. Please ask the veterinary team if you have any further questions or concerns.