



Cat Spraying

Cat spraying (urine spraying) is the term used to describe a normal territory-marking behaviour in cats whereby they spray in prominent places, mainly on vertical surfaces. Your cat will use spraying to mark territory and reduce the likelihood of conflict with other cats. Un-neutered cats also spray to attract a mate during breeding season.

Spraying often happens:

- In places where people come and go from the house
- On full length curtains positioned next to potential entry and exit points.
- On new items, or items that smell different from what they are used to (shoes, coats, suitcases, etc.)
- Or on items that heat up or cool down, like heat registers, presumably due to the change in their smell as the temperature changes.

With indoor spaces, cats will frequently mark the same area to “top up” the fading smell of a previous spraying.

Why do cats spray?

- As mentioned above, un-neutered cats will spray to attract a mate. Neutering the cat will reduce this type of spraying, if not stop it completely.
- If your cat is neutered yet still spraying, this is typically “reactional spraying” which occurs when there has been a change in your cat’s environment like the addition of new cats or people. If the change is in the areas the cat eats, sleeps, or plays in, they are more likely to react.
- It doesn’t matter if your cat is confident or anxious, male or female – any cat will spray if they feel they need to. When a cat feels threatened by something in the house, they spray to make themselves feel safer.

What can I do if my cat is spraying?

- Clean the area and don’t punish your cat. The spraying is happening for a reason, and it is important to figure out what that reason is so you can help them and prevent future spraying.
- Have your cat checked by a veterinarian to ensure there isn’t a medical reason for the spraying.
- If there is not a medical issue, treat your cat as you normally would. Cats are in tune with their owners and any changes to your behaviour might leave your cat feeling unsettled, which could lead to more spraying.



How do I clean the area where my cat sprayed?

- If your cat has sprayed on fabric or upholstery, use a cleaner specifically made for removing stains and odor. Try to make these items inaccessible by your cat, or protect them by covering them with plastic, etc., while you work on the spraying issue.
- Cleaning the area may not be enough to prevent your cat from spraying. They may simply find new areas to spray.
- Try a synthetic pheromone like Feliway®, which may help your cat feel reassured, after cleaning the area.

How can I stop my cat from spraying?

- This issue is one that may be difficult to resolve on your own as the cause may be several different things.
- Ensure your cat has everything they need and keep an eye on their general behaviour, in addition to the spraying. If there is another cat in the house, there is a chance there may be issues between the two of them you hadn't previously noticed.
- Keep notes of where and when the spraying takes place. This can help you or your vet to have a better picture of what is happening. If you have more than one cat, it's important to determine which one is doing the spraying. Even if you catch one cat spraying, there is a chance the other is doing the same, more discreetly.
- Though spraying is likely not related to toileting issues, make sure your cat has enough litter trays, that they're the right size, in the right space, have the right amount of the right litter and aren't being blocked or guarded by another cat.

What if the behaviour continues?

If working with your vet hasn't helped to stop your cat from spraying, you may need to engage with a cat behaviourist. Some are available for online consultations if not located in our local region.