

# **FELINE LOWER URINARY TRACT DISEASE (FLUTD)**

*also known as feline urologic syndrome or feline interstitial cystitis*

This is a common disease of young and middle-aged cats which causes inflammation in the bladder. This results in typical 'cystitis' symptoms- frequent squatting and straining to urinate and sometimes blood in the urine. Bouts of cystitis tend to last for several days and tend to recur quite often.

In male cats the disease can be dangerous, as the urethra, which empties the bladder and runs through the penis, is only about the width of a sewing needle. It can easily become totally blocked with inflammatory cells and small crystals, leaving the cat unable to pass urine.

**In males showing these symptoms it is vital to get to the vet urgently to find out if the bladder has become blocked.**

Certain risk factors are known to predispose cats to developing FLUTD. There are several things that you can do to reduce these risk factors and help to control the problem.

## **WATER INTAKE**

The single most important factor is a cat's water intake. Cats are basically desert animals, they are built to conserve water and produce concentrated urine. They have a poorly developed sense of thirst and frequently drink little.

➤ Cats obtain most of their water from their food. Cats on dried foods take in significantly less water than cats on wet diets. Cats with FLUTD should be **fed only wet foods** if possible. Experts all agree that this is the single most important factor in controlling FLUTD. If any crystals have been found in a urine sample, male cats particularly should be fed on a prescription low mineral diet to reduce the risk of urethral blockage.

Cats who can only be fed on a dried diet should be fed a special diet, please ask the vet about this.

➤ Cats should be encouraged to drink water. They are notoriously fussy animals when it comes to their water supply but it is worth experimenting to see if you can encourage them to drink. Some cats do not like chlorinated water it is worth trying them with rain water, filtered water or bottled water.

Many cats prefer dripping water from a tap. These cats may drink from a small indoor fountain. Some cats do not like plastic bowls and it is worth trying glass bowls.

➤ Cats should be encouraged to drink other fluids, cats can be given milk (or cat milk if cows milk gives them diarrhoea), meat or fish stocks or any other fluids that they seem to like.

➤ Add a small amount of salt (small pinch) to the food.

## **BODYWEIGHT AND ACTIVITY**

The risks of FLUTD are higher in overweight and sedentary cats. It is worth trying to slim down overweight cats and encouraging exercise.

## **STRESS**

Stress seems to increase the risks of FLUTD. This most often takes the form of conflict with other cats, either another cat in the same household or being bullied by another cat in the neighbourhood. There is not always a lot you can do about this but sometimes pheromone sprays or 'plug-ins' can help to reduce stress, please ask the vet.

## **TREATMENT**

This condition tends to be recurrent. Tablets can be used to help to reduce the frequency and severity of bouts. They should be used strategically, start to give them as soon as the symptoms are seen and continue for ten days. Remember that male cats should be checked at the vet to ensure that the bladder is not blocked.