

Homeless Pets Foundation

FELINE URINE SPRAYING

Sometimes Felix might engage in a behavior called urine spraying or urine marking. Felix will stand, back up to an object, hold his tail up erect and quivering, and release urine out backwards onto an object. This urine sprayed differs chemically from the urine cats normally release from a squatting position because it also contains oily secretions from the anal glands. Sprayed urine is extremely pungent and is sometimes described as an odor similar to ammonia or a heavy musky odor. Occasionally Felix might spray from a squatting position.



Why does Felix spray urine? Felix sprays during territorial disputes, during aggressive conflicts, or sexual encounters. The majority of cats that spray do so outside. Cats share their presence in a territory by spraying visually conspicuous sites. Cats time share territories, so the marks enable Felix to space himself from others so they don't often meet. Some cats spray urine inside their homes. Often indoor spraying results from conflicts between cats in the home or from the resident cat feeling threatened by outside cats.

Most often, cats who spray are reproductively intact males (toms) but females also sometimes spray. Neutering is the most effective way to curb spraying in a tomcat. In one study, 77 percent of cats stopped or significantly reduced spraying within six months of being neutered. Neutered cats can spray as well. Ten percent of male cats neutered before 10 months of age will still spray as adults. In households with numerous cats, at least one cat will likely spray, even if all the cats are neutered.

What to Do:

Neuter or spay Felix.

Identify the reasons Felix may be spraying. For instance, if Felix is reacting to the sight of cats outside, block his view. If Felix is reacting to the scent of cats outside, possibly through a screen door, prevent Felix from coming into contact with these scents. Keep the door closed.

Discourage other cats from hanging around outside the house. Motion-activated devices, such as *Critter Gitter*[™], *Scarecrow*[™], or *Scraminal*[™], all function to frighten outdoor cats away. The *Scat Mat*[™] and *Sofa Saver*[™] can be used to keep outdoor cats away from doors and windows.

If Felix is spraying in one or a few locations, make these areas less appealing, using a booby trap, such as *Ssscat*[™]. *Ssscat*[™] is a motion-activated device that sprays the cat with a harmless albeit unpleasant aerosol. Alternatively, put out an unwelcome mat for Felix by placing foil, plastic wrap, or upside-down vinyl carpet runner where he sprays. Be aware that Felix might just choose a new spot to spray.

Try eliciting a different behavior in the sprayed locations. Place items that stimulate behaviors incompatible with spraying, such as the food dish or toys, in the spots.

Try placing a litter box in each location. If Felix is spraying on the wall beside the litter box, try attaching a liner on the wall and drape it down into the box. Should Felix spray there, the urine at least will drip down into the box.

Spray *Feliway*[™] in the areas where Felix is spraying. *Feliway*[™] is a synthetic pheromone designed to elicit calm, friendly behavior in cats. Research supports the claim that *Feliway*[™] reduces indoor urine spraying.

If the spraying is due to conflict among resident cats, seek counsel on resolving the conflict. Separate the cats or at least isolate the spraying cat until harmony can be restored. If this is not possible, re-homing to reduce the numbers may be the only viable solution. A spraying cat might not spray at all in a new home with fewer cats.

Drug therapy can also help resolve a spraying problem. There are numerous medications that have been demonstrated to be effective in individual cases—e.g., the Benzodiazepines (i.e. Valium), other anti-anxiety drugs (i.e. Clomipramine or BuSpar), or progestins.

Make sure sprayed areas are cleaned with an enzymatic cleanser designed to eliminate odors.

If it can be done safely, allow Felix to spend time outside. Sometimes this results in a cat spraying outside the home rather than inside. Building a large wire enclosure for Felix outside may be sufficient to stimulate him to spray outdoors.

What Not to Do:

Do not punish Felix by hitting, spanking, or slapping for spraying him. Similarly, do not take Felix to the area and admonish him. This might well teach Felix fear and he may actually spray more if he is stressed by the punishment.