

Village Veterinary Practice Newsletter

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 8

AUGUST 2011

Complex Causes for Cat's Inappropriate Elimination

Cat owners are often flummoxed when their pets suddenly stop using the litter box. The reasons for this change in behavior can be quite complex, according to Dr. Kelly Ballantyne, a veterinarian with a special interest in behavior who practices at the University of Illinois Chicago Center for Veterinary Medicine, at 2242 West Harrison, Chicago.

While cats may stop using the litter box because something is upsetting them, it's important for owners to understand that the cat is not doing this to be vindictive. Your cat may not like that you spend long days away from home, but she won't take revenge on you. Punishing cats when you find a mess they made is not helpful. The cats won't connect this punishment with their previous actions, which may have happened long before.

However, there usually is a reason for the behavior. Your first step should be to consult with your veterinarian to rule out a medical cause, such as an infection. Diabetes is another condition that increases the frequency of urination, making going to find the litter box every time inconvenient.

Seemingly unrelated medical conditions may be causing the problem. For example, if the cat has arthritis, she may find stepping over high walls to get into the litter box painful, making it easier just to go on a particular part of the carpet. Other medical conditions can result in not using the litter box as well.

If no medical reason for the behavior is found, you may have to take time to sleuth out the underlying cause. Among the most common behavioral reasons for inappropriate urination are marking, an upset in routine, and fastidiousness. Your veterinarian can be your ally for detecting a non-medical cause as well.

Cats that urine mark or spray are sending a message to other cats. While humans find this distasteful, to say the least, marking is a normal form of communication in cats. Marking occurs with female as well as male cats.

Marking is usually greatly reduced or resolved by spaying or neutering the cat. If that doesn't resolve the problem, the answer may be a bit more complex.

Continued on Page 2

Clarendon Hills

Dr. Scott Kruse
Dr. Jon Jorgensen
Dr. Holly Shields Hayna

4 Walker Avenue
Clarendon Hills, IL 60514
P: (630) 323-5500
F: (630) 323-5526

Western Springs

Dr. John Green
Dr. Joe Gibbs

500 Hillgrove Avenue
Western Springs, IL 60558
P: (708) 246-6462
F: (708) 246-9114

Hours

M—Th: 7:45am—5:30pm
Friday: 7:45am—5:00pm
Call for Saturdays
House Calls Available

Inside this issue:

Complex Causes for Cat's Inappropriate Elimination 1
Ear Infections 3

Complex Causes for Cat's Inappropriate Elimination

Continued from Page 1

Marking may occur because another cat--or family member--is making your cat feel anxious. The source of anxiety could be cats wandering outside your house where your cat can see them, or it could even be a guest or new human in your home. Many other stressors are possible.

Feliway is a pheromone diffuser for cats that is supposed to be calming and soothing. That coupled with changes to make the environment more "safe," such as preventing your cat from seeing the outdoor cats, can make the difference. You can also encourage other forms of marking, by providing scratching posts throughout the home.

If the inappropriate elimination isn't due to marking, the cause could be some household change that is making your cat feel insecure. Is there a new cat in the house? Has your routine changed?

Anything around the litter box that makes cats feel unsafe could lead them to stop using it. Does the litter box sit next to something that creates loud noises, such as the washing machine? Perhaps your dog likes to loom over your cat and sniff at him while he is in the litter box. Pinpointing the source of the cat's unease may be difficult, but it could solve the problem.

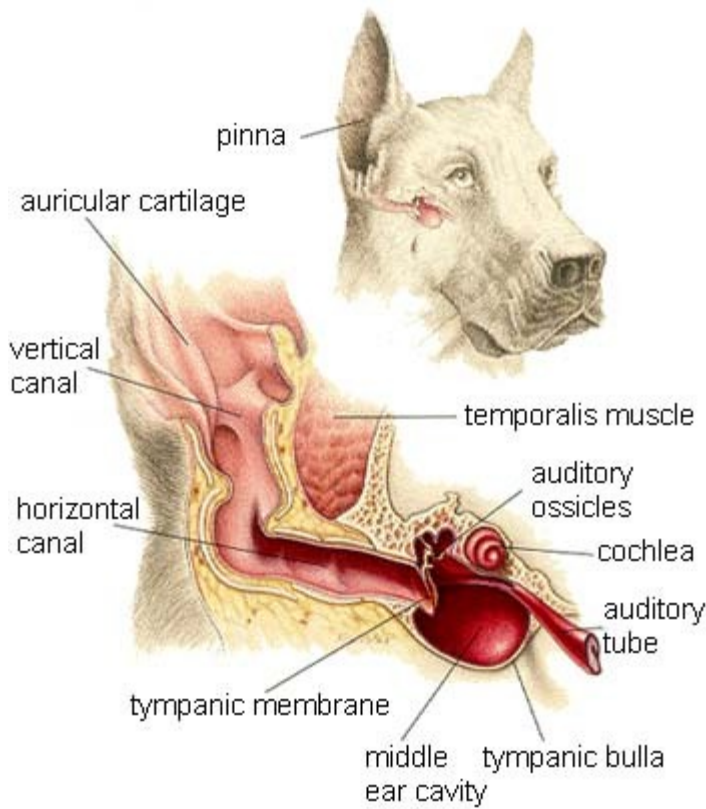
Cats are quite fastidious by nature and won't use a litter box that isn't to their liking or standard. If the litter box is scooped only once a week, try scooping it once to twice daily. A change in the type of litter could also be disliked by your cat.

If you have more than one cat in your house, you will need multiple litter boxes. A good rule of thumb for the number of litter boxes is one more than the number of cats you have. Realize that litter boxes that are next to each other or in the same small room are seen as one big litter box to your cats.

Cats also don't like to have their litter box near where they eat or drink. (Imagine if you had to eat dinner in the bathroom!) Keep their food dishes in a different location from the litter boxes. Alternatively, you can try placing their food near the area where they are inappropriately eliminating to deter them.

It may require good observation and a bit of detective work, but with persistence, patience, and the help of your veterinarian, you can usually eliminate kitty's elimination problems.

[Andrea Lin—Information Specialist, University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine](#)



Ear Infections

Have you ever been woken up in the middle of the night from the sound of your pet excessively shaking his head or scratching his ears? This is how Jack, my Labrador Retriever, lets me know he has an ear infection – and yes, it always seems to be in the middle of the night!

Ear infections are not all created equal and neither are the medications used to treat them. Most ear infections develop as a result of a bacteria or yeast overgrowth within the ear; however, ear mites and allergies can mimic the same clinical symptoms as an ear infection and be just as uncomfortable. Although any animal can develop an ear infection, animals with pendulous (floppy) ears, and animals with excessive amounts of hair in the ear canal are typically more prone to these infections.

When an ear infection is present, most pets will express their discomfort by shaking their heads and scratching their ears just like Jack. If you take a closer look on the inside of the ear, you may also see redness, swelling and a brown or yellow discharge. Additionally, many ear infections come with an unpleasant odor which can sometimes be a little overwhelming.

When your pet begins displaying these clinical symptoms it is time for a veterinary visit to find out what is causing the infection, and more importantly how to resolve it so your pet can get some much needed relief!

During your pet's visit, your veterinarian will evaluate the ears with an instrument called an otoscope. This instrument is placed inside the ear and produces light and magnification within the dark canal. During this part of the exam, the doctor is looking for any masses, foreign bodies, redness/swelling, discharge, and finally, ensuring that the tympanic membrane (ear drum) has not ruptured.

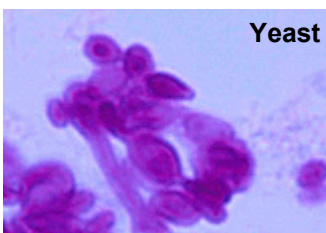
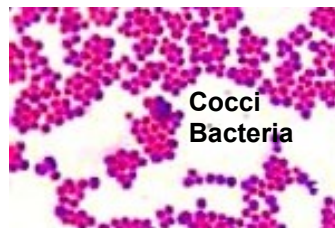
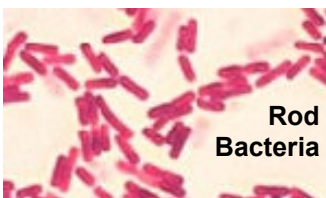
The debris from the affected ear is placed on a glass slide and then microscopically evaluated. This process is called cytology and will determine if bacteria, yeast or ear mites are present within the ear.

Continued on Page 4

Never use a Q-Tip to clean out your pets ears.

Ear
Cleaning
Tip

Q-Tips can push debris closer to the ear drum (aka tympanic membrane) and lead to potential damage. Cotton Balls work better!



Ear Infections (Continued from page 3)



After the ear is examined and the source of the infection has been determined by the cytology, your veterinarian can then choose the appropriate medication and cleaning regimen to resolve the problem.

Though you can't prevent your pet from getting an ear infection, you can maintain control by doing a few simple things. First check your pet's ears regularly for signs of an ear infection and begin a weekly ear cleaning routine. Next, if your pet

If your pet suffers from multiple ear infections each year, it is important to remember that the type of ear infection can change from one infection to the next. So, the medication you treated your pet's ear infection with last time, may not be the appropriate medication this time. This is why the cytology is necessary. Treating an infection with the wrong medication is not helpful to the pet, nor is it time or cost effective for the owner.

grows a lot of hair within his ears, put in a request to the groomer to remove it. Excessive hair within the canal will trap debris, moisture and wax which can lead to an infection. And finally, dry the inside of

• • • • •
"Ear infections are not all
created equal and
neither are the medications
used to treat them"
• • • • •

your pet's ears after bathing or swimming to remove as much moisture as possible.

With these simple tips, you will catch ear problems early and be able get your pet treatment before he pet becomes too uncomfortable.



Village Veterinary Practice	Clarendon Hills 4 Walker Avenue Clarendon Hills, IL 60514 Phone: 630-323-5500 Fax: 630-323-5526
	Western Springs 500 Hillgrove Avenue Western Springs, IL 60558 Phone: 708-246-6462 Fax: 708-246-9114
	www.villageveterinary.com

<u>The Village Veterinary Practice Vision</u>
Village Veterinary Practice was founded with the belief that companion animals deserve the best quality of life possible. Our vision is inspired by our patients, the devotion of their human families and the commitment of our veterinarians. It is sustained by the contributions of our compassionate, knowledgeable and dedicated staff and built upon a strong tradition of providing unsurpassed veterinary care for companion animals.
<u>The Village Veterinary Practice Mission</u>
Village Veterinary Practice was established to care for your pet as a family member. By utilizing the latest medical advances, sound guidance and desire, we strive to make the family pet bond an enjoyable, healthy and life enriching experience.