

## **Problems passing urine - the blocked cat**

Feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD) is a catch-all term used by vets to describe a number of conditions which cause cats pain and discomfort when trying to pass urine. These include different types of bladder stones, blockages in the tubes running from the bladder to the outside and inflammation of the bladder itself (cystitis). About three in every 100 cats will be affected at some stage in their lives and some can suffer recurrent problems. In extreme cases your cat may be unable to empty its bladder and may die without emergency treatment.

### **Causes of FLUTD**

- In up to half of cats with FLUTD it is very difficult to be sure of the cause of the disease. However, a number of factors appear to increase the risk, such as:
- Stressful experiences (e.g. moving house, going into a cattery)
- Diet - mineral balance, urine pH and water intake may all affect the risk of the disease.
- Infection may produce swelling and the formation of pus which can block the cat's urine tubes (ureter and urethra).
- Diabetes and some viral diseases may make cats more vulnerable to infection.
- Obesity - problems are more common in overweight and inactive cats which are often too lazy to go outside to toilet frequently.
- Urine retention - cats who, for some reason, hold their urine for long periods, ie do not go to the toilet frequently may be at greater risk of developing bladder stones.
- Anatomical abnormalities or tumours may make it difficult for some cats to pass urine.

### **Symptoms**

- Regular visits to its litter tray or outside to its favourite toilet area but without much success. There may be small amounts of dark or red (blood-stained) urine.
- Straining, which may often be confused with constipation
- Crying out in pain or licking around its bottom or penis area.
- Going to the toilet in the wrong place.
- If there is a total blockage which is not corrected quickly by a veterinarian it may cause permanent kidney damage, collapse and death.

### **Treatment**

- A complete blockage is an emergency and your vet will have to act fast. At first your cat may only seem mildly depressed with occasional vomiting but within 48 hours it could have lapsed into a coma and died. Your cat will be anaesthetised and a tube ('catheter') inserted into its bladder to drain the trapped urine and relieve the pressure.
- Occasionally stones may be surgically removed.
- Less serious cases will be given pain killers and drugs to reduce the inflammation. Antibiotics may help get rid of any infection.

### **Reducing the Risk**

- Encourage your cat to drink plenty of water - always make sure water is fresh. Some cats may prefer drinking running water which can be provided in a cat water fountain
- Adjusting its diet - cats prone to FLUTD should be fed only wet food. Water can be mixed in with food. Prescription diets for cystitis or stones will be recommended by your vet.
- Some cats may need daily medication to help keep their urine acid.
- Always make sure there are plenty of clean litter trays (especially in a multi-cat household).
- Monitoring your cat's behaviour and toileting habits will help you identify a problem quickly before it becomes potentially life threatening