



Spraying

What is spraying?

Spraying is normal feline behaviour. It is not the same as urination, but is a form of communication. Cats urinate from a squatting position, but spray while standing. Most cats spray—both male and female, neutered and unneutered.

Outdoors, it is normal for cats to spray to mark their territory. Indoors, however, this is not normal behaviour for a healthy cat, and signals stress and anxiety.

Why do cats spray?

Indoor spraying means a cat feels insecure. Sometimes, reasons for this can be hard to pinpoint, but often stem from something new or changed in the home, such as furniture, carpets, renovations, people (eg the arrival of a baby) and other pets. The more sensitive the cat, the more the tendency to spray; some cats have even sprayed owners who wore new clothes which smelled unfamiliar. One common cause that many pet owners may not be aware of is strange cats invading the home through the cat flap, causing alarm among the feline inhabitants who then spray to reclaim their territory.

How do I deal with indoor spraying?

Above all, do not punish the offender. Since stress and anxiety are at the root of spraying, punishment would only make the situation worse. Once you have established the catalyst for the spraying behaviour, you can better help your cat regain his sense of security. For example, if you are renovating, try to restrict his movements to familiar 'comfort zones'. Regular affection and interaction with him – particularly during times of change – will help to re-establish and maintain his sense of well-being.

Cleaning

Proper cleaning of the sprayed area is crucial since, unless spray marks are thoroughly removed, cats may return to 'top up' their scent. Avoid cleaning agents containing ammonia and chlorine such as bleach, as these are found in urine, and might encourage repeat behaviour. Clean the area with a warm dilute solution of a biological washing powder, rinse with cold water then allow to dry. Next, spray the area with an alcohol such as surgical spirit, and allow to dry thoroughly before allowing the cat back into the area. The aim is to remove the smell of cat urine without replacing it with a potentially challenging alternative.



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