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Your Cat

FELINE LOWER URINARY TRACT DISEASE (FLUTD)



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Animal Health Trust

Lanwades Park, Kentford

Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 7UU

This leaflet has been produced collaboratively with the Feline Advisory Bureau.

The Feline Advisory Bureau is a charity dedicated to the health and welfare of cats.

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Your Cat &

FELINE LOWER
URINARY TRACT
DISEASE (FLUTD)



Animal *Health* Trust
the science behind animal welfare

Your Cat &

FELINE LOWER URINARY TRACT DISEASE

Feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD) describes a collection of conditions that affect the bladder and/or urethra (lower urinary tract).

Clinical signs of FLUTD

Typical signs of FLUTD include difficulty or pain when passing urine, an increased frequency of urination, blood in the urine, urination outside the litter-box or sometimes complete obstruction to urine outflow. Some cats show loss of litter-box training, aggression or excessive licking around the perineal area. FLUTD can be seen in cats of any age, but most frequently affects middle-aged, over-weight indoor cats that lead a sedentary life-style and eat a dry diet.

Causes and diagnosis of FLUTD

The most common causes are idiopathic cystitis (cystitis of no known cause), and bladder stones (uroliths). Bladder cancer and bacterial cystitis (infection of the bladder) along with abnormalities such as strictures (narrowing) of the urethra are uncommon causes.

Diagnosing the cause of FLUTD requires careful evaluation of the urinary system, including x-ray studies of the bladder and urethra, and analysis of urine samples (including urine culture for the presence of bacteria). Occasionally additional

investigations such as ultrasound examination or bladder biopsy may be necessary.

Feline idiopathic cystitis (FIC)

Idiopathic FLUTD (iFLUTD) or feline idiopathic cystitis (FIC) accounts for 60-70% of cases of FLUTD – these cats do not have a bladder infection, but the cause of the inflammation is unknown. Until we understand this condition better, effective treatment may remain elusive. FIC can only be diagnosed by ruling out other recognised causes of the clinical signs.

Bladder stones

Bladder stones (uroliths) vary in their exact composition, but their presence causes irritation and inflammation to the lining of the bladder. In male cats in particular, their long narrow urethra means small stones can sometimes become lodged and cause blockage to the passage of urine. Uroliths are the underlying cause in around 15% of cases of FLUTD.

Urethral plugs

Urethral plugs are a common cause of obstruction of the urethra in male cats. They are composed of a mixture of inflammatory proteins, crystals and cell debris. In many cases it is thought that the underlying cause of these is FIC (see above).



Bacterial cystitis

Unlike people and dogs, bacterial cystitis is uncommon in cats (causing less than 3% of all cases of FLUTD). However, this is seen more frequently in older cats and can be diagnosed by analysis and culture of urine samples.

Treatment of FLUTD

Bladder stones (uroliths)

Treatment of uroliths depends on the type of stone present. With an appropriate change in diet, some stones can actually dissolve over time, whereas others need to be removed surgically. Again, depending on the type of stone present, a special diet may be valuable to help prevent their recurrence in the future.

Bacterial cystitis

Although bacterial cystitis is rare in cats, when it does occur antibiotics are used to eliminate the infection. However, their use should be restricted to cases where bacterial infection is known to be present.

Urethral blockage

If a cat is persistently straining to pass urine but little or no urine is being produced, this could be an indication of a urethral blockage. The obstruction to the flow of urine can rapidly cause the kidneys to stop working and, in severe

cases, death can occur within just a few days. If urethral obstruction is suspected emergency veterinary attention should be sought.

Management of idiopathic cystitis

Most cases of FIC are self-limiting – the signs may come on quite suddenly, but they usually resolve spontaneously within 1-2 weeks (irrespective of whether any treatment is given). Most affected cats have repeat episodes (at varying intervals), and some have more persistent signs. Treatment is valuable to reduce the frequency and severity of the signs, although the lack of understanding of the causes of the inflammation limits our ability to provide effective and specific treatment.

However, maximising water intake (feeding tinned/sachet or 'wet' foods rather than dry foods, adding water to the food, encouraging water intake through the use of flavoured waters or 'pet fountains' etc) appears to be the single most useful long-term control measure.

In some cats, stress may exacerbate the disease and measures to reduce stress in the environment may help. A number of drugs may also help, but they are generally less useful than increasing water intake.