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Feline Urologic Syndrome (FUS) Feline lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD)

What is FUS / FLUTD?

FUS or FLUTD is a term that describes a condition that affects a cats urinary system. Symptoms include:

- Bloody urine
- Straining to urinate (can often be mistaken for straining to defecate)
- Urinating in unusual places
- Urinary obstruction (almost exclusively a male cat problem)
- Crying while in the litter box
- Excessive genital grooming (due to pain)
- Increase frequency of urination

FLUTD affects approximately 1% of the cat population and the average age of cats with FLUTD is 4 years old. Once a cat has displayed symptoms of FLUTD the likelihood of recurrence is between 30 and 50%. The disease can be more serious in males than females because of the possibility of urinary obstruction which is a medical emergency and can be life threatening.

What causes FUS / FLUTD?

In over 50% of the cases, a cause for FUS / FLUTD cannot be found. Bacteria, viruses, bladder crystals or stones, tumors, nerve damage and birth defects can all contribute to the development of FUS / FLUTD. Another important factor is diet, especially those that are high in magnesium and phosphorus. Obesity can also predispose a cat to develop FUS / FLUTD. Eating more food means excreting more minerals into the urine. Since cat urine is so concentrated, there is a greater chance for these minerals to form crystals. Males, especially castrated males, have an extra worry with crystals. Their urethra narrows a great deal at the end of their penis and they are more likely to develop a life threatening obstruction.

What is the treatment for FUS / FLUTD?

1. The treatment depends on the results of a physical exam and urine analysis. It may require a change in diet, antibiotics, pain medication, urinary acidifiers or antiseptics, anti-spasmodics or a combination of medication. For the medication to be effective, it must be given faithfully for a number of weeks. Failure to do so can result in a recurrence of a prolonging of the symptoms, and can even lead to kidney infections and kidney failure.
2. The urine should be tested 7 to 10 days after starting the treatment and again 4 to 5 days after finishing the medication to determine the effectiveness of the treatment.
3. Urine may be collected at home in an empty litter pan lined with plastic or a box filled with plastic beads that you can get from us. Bring it to the clinic while it is very fresh – either within the hour or you can refrigerate it for 2 hours.

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4. Your cat may have to come in for an appointment to have urine collected or stay at the clinic for a few hours to have urine collected if you are unable to obtain it at home.
5. If treatment is ineffective it may be necessary to withhold medication for several days and to bring the cat into the clinic to have a sterile urine sample collected for bacterial culture and antibiotic sensitivity testing. At the same time it is advisable to have an x-ray or ultrasound of the urinary bladder with the cat under light anesthesia to check for possible urinary bladder stones, tumors or birth defects in the bladder.
6. Plenty of clean, fresh, room temperature water in clean dishes should be provided.
7. Thoroughly clean the litter box each day. Use generic litter, not those with deodorant added.
8. Changing from a dry to a canned food can increase the cat's intake of water as can lightly sprinkling the food with salt.
9. Cats that do have a urethral blockage require hospitalization and anesthesia to relieve the obstruction. Some male cats with repeated episodes of urethral blockages benefit from surgery. The procedure creates a larger opening through which they urinate – essentially the same as a female cat. Although this might increase their chance of bladder infections, it virtually eliminates the chance for repeated blockages.

Suggested foods that are low in magnesium and phosphorus

From pet shops:

Iams
Eukanuba
Feline Science Diet, canned or dry

From veterinarians:

Hill's Prescription Diet c/d, canned or dry
Hill's Prescription Diet s/d, canned or dry
Royal Canin Urinary SO