

# Sterile Cystitis in Cats

Sterile cystitis is characterized by painful and/or frequent urination of small amounts, and is often confused with urinary tract infections or kidney issues.

## **Diagnosis:**

The only way to diagnose idiopathic sterile cystitis is to rule out everything else. Necessary tests may include a urinalysis, bloodwork, urine culture, radiograph and ultrasound.

Most cats first experience symptoms between the ages of 2 and 6 years. Up to 50% of cats with the above-mentioned symptoms will never have an underlying cause diagnosed. These cats will be diagnosed with idiopathic sterile cystitis.

## **Treatment:**

There is no known cause and no definitive treatment. A leading theory now is that it involves some measure of stress effects on the bladder made worse when concentrated urine is retained in the bladder. This means that reducing the frequency of flare-ups will involve:

### 1. Reducing Stress:

Each cat's environment and lifestyle must be evaluated since each cat will have different triggers. Does the cat have enough time alone? Does it have enough interaction with people? Are other house cats picking on him/her? Does it have its own food bowl? Does it live in an extremely noisy environment? Do the household children pester it?

### 2. Litter Box Management:

Is there at least 1 litter box per cat? Is the litter box cleaned daily? Are litter boxes with this cat's favorite substrate available (clay, clumping, paper, etc.)? Does this cat prefer a covered or non-covered box? Is the litter box always accessible or is it sometimes behind closed doors? Is the litter box large enough to be used comfortably?

### 3. Increasing Water Consumption:

This may require some creativity on the owner's part. Try a fountain with constantly running water. Liquid treats such as tuna water or chicken broth can be made into ice cubes and added to water (which must then be changed frequently). Switching to a canned diet or adding water to a dry diet may be a reasonable option (for some cats, a specific urinary diet will be recommended).

Even if all these measures are undertaken, most cats will still have occasional flare-ups and your pet may still require additional care depending on their symptoms.

Idiopathic sterile cystitis can be a very frustrating disease, and owners should be aware that it is a chronic disease - most cats can be managed, but not cured.