



Cats That Spray

Cats communicate with each other primarily through scent. They will mark you and things in your house by rubbing on you.



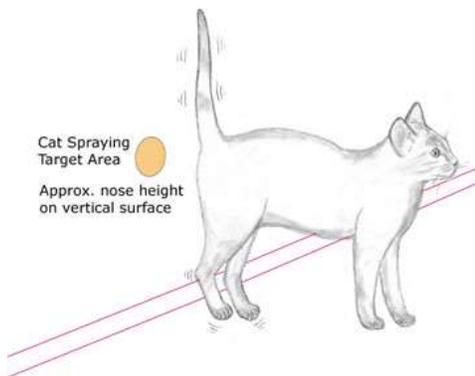
There are scent glands in their cheeks and flanks and rubbing leaves their scent on you. This tells another cat that you are his.

Cats can also leave their mark with urine and that creates problems within a house. Urine marking is not a litter box problem. It is a normal method of cat communication for cats.

Fortunately, it's not a common problem, but when it does occur, it's a big problem for the people dealing with it.

What cats do

A cat that is marking is usually spraying. He will back up to a vertical surface, lift this tail up and spray urine.



Often the tip of his tail twitches. The volume of urine is usually much smaller than normal urination and the odor may be more pungent.

Occasionally some cats will urinate on horizontal surfaces when they mark. When this happens, you may have to do some investigative work to determine whether it's a litter box problem or marking.

Spraying is easy to identify and indicates a behavioral issue. Cats that mark in the house will also use a litter box.

Why they do it & what to do

- Unneutered and unspayed cats are much more likely to spray. Neutering them will solve the problem in some cases. The earlier they are neutered, the better.
- Changes of any type can stress cats and cause them to mark their territory or lead to other types of inappropriate urination. Remove the cause of the stress. You may need to use supplements or medications to resolve it.
- Conflict between cats can cause some cats to spray. The more cats in a house, the more likely you are to have problems. Feliway®, a pheromone to reduce stress in cats, may help. Provide areas where cats can get away from each other by increasing vertical space with climbing areas.
- Stress from seeing outdoor cats can cause some cats to spray. Use motion activated sprinklers or other products to keep cats out of your yard, and cover windows.

Other things to do

- If you have more than one cat, you will need to know which cat is spraying. To isolate a specific cat, ask your veterinarian about adding fluorescein dye to the cat's food and check it with a black light. The dye will glow in the urine. Do this with one cat at a time.



- Increase “enrichment” in the cat’s environment to give all the cats their own personal space. Provide plenty of litter boxes, toys, food and water bowls in multiple locations so that each cat can have their own.

Provide areas where they can hide and climb. This is beneficial for all cats even if they are not spraying.

- Clean soiled areas with an enzymatic cleaner designed to neutralize odor. Do this before using anything else on the area and before having the carpet professionally cleaned.
- If possible, restrict the cat’s access to areas that have been sprayed. You can place an upside down carpet runner (nubby side up), foil, or double-sided sticky tape there. Placing food or water dishes in the area may also help.

Professional help

Cats that spray are usually anxious cats under stress. Some of the tips on enrichment will improve the situation for some cats. In other situations, medications to reduce anxiety are needed.



This can be a very frustrating situation for both you and your cat. Work with your veterinarian or an animal behaviorist for your best chance at success.