

cat spraying

basic feline care

Your cat backs up to an object with its tail lifted vertically and sprays a fine mist of urine. What is happening and how do you prevent it?

Spraying:

Spraying is not a litter box problem, but is instead an important part of nonverbal communication among cats to establish and define boundaries. Cats spray either to mark territory or to express unhappiness about changes going on around them. Cats mark their territory in several different ways: by scratching, rubbing against an object or spraying.

Urine marking (spraying) is different from a house-training problem. The cat backs up to an object, points its tail straight up in the air and sprays a nasty, smelly shot of urine. Both males and females spray, though most often a male cat is the offender. There are several approaches to solving this problem, and you may have to try them all before finding what works best for your cat.

If your cat is not spayed or neutered, get it done immediately. Sexual excitement often triggers marking behavior. A passing cat outside is enough to start it. Altering by six months of age prevents the habit from developing. An unneutered male or a female in heat can be especially obnoxious by howling, trying to get outside and spraying the door because of frustration. Spayed or neutered cats can still spray, although they typically do not.

Changes of any kind in your cat's environment can also trigger a bout of spraying as they express their frustration, confusion and stress.



Developed with and approved by a qualified veterinarian.

Some situations that can cause a cat to begin spraying:

- Moving to a new home
- Getting a new cat or dog
- A new baby or family member
- New or rearranged furniture
- Moving the litter box
- Dirty litter box
- Changing brands of litter

Cats are very sensitive and don't have a lot of ways to tell you about their unhappiness.

Where cats will spray:

Corners of vertical objects are a cat's favorite. Your cat will choose a chair or table leg, a wall, the edge of a door and just about any other thing they can back up to and get a good aim.

Equipment needed:

- Pet stain & odor remover
- Pet repellent spray
- Carpet shampoo
- Cleaning dry powders
- Cleaning mineral rock products
- Cleaning enzymal products
- Cleaning enzyme/bacteria kits
- Aluminum foil

What you can do:

If you catch your cat in the act of spraying, try distraction with toys or attention. Clean sprayed areas and treat with a pet stain & odor remover. Do not use ammonia or bleach because the odor is similar to urine and may actually encourage your cat to spray on the same spot again. Try some of the following products to clean and deodorize.

Product type	How it works	Where it works
Carpet shampoo	Detergent cleaning action.	On carpets, but only when the stain is fresh.
Dry powders	Uses super absorbency to remove stains and odors.	Upholstery, wood, linoleum, concrete. Not as effective with carpets.
Mineral rock products	Absorbs stain & odor molecules by exchanging electrically charged particles.	Any smooth surface. Not as effective with carpets.
Enzymal products	Uses enzymes to break down the odor-causing compounds.	Carpets, concrete, wood, linoleum, upholstery.
Enzyme/bacteria kits	Uses enzymes to break down odor-causing compounds and then bacteria to "eat" them.	Carpets, upholstery, concrete, wood, linoleum.

To discourage repeat spraying, apply a pet repellent and cover the spot with aluminum foil. Cats are very annoyed by the sound of urine hitting foil and usually will leave it alone.

Sometimes confining your pet to a private room for a few days will break the cycle of spraying and provide a chance for them to get over whatever is bothering them.

Medical intervention is often needed to cure spraying. Your veterinarian may prescribe hormones or a mild tranquilizer. There are products available that may help relieve stress and sometimes help to cure furniture scratching too. Spray the spot, not the cat.

Consider a consultation with a behavior specialist in your home. An expert can assess your situation unemotionally and may suggest some practical solutions you have not thought of. Contact your veterinarian, local veterinary specialty hospital or university for a referral.

