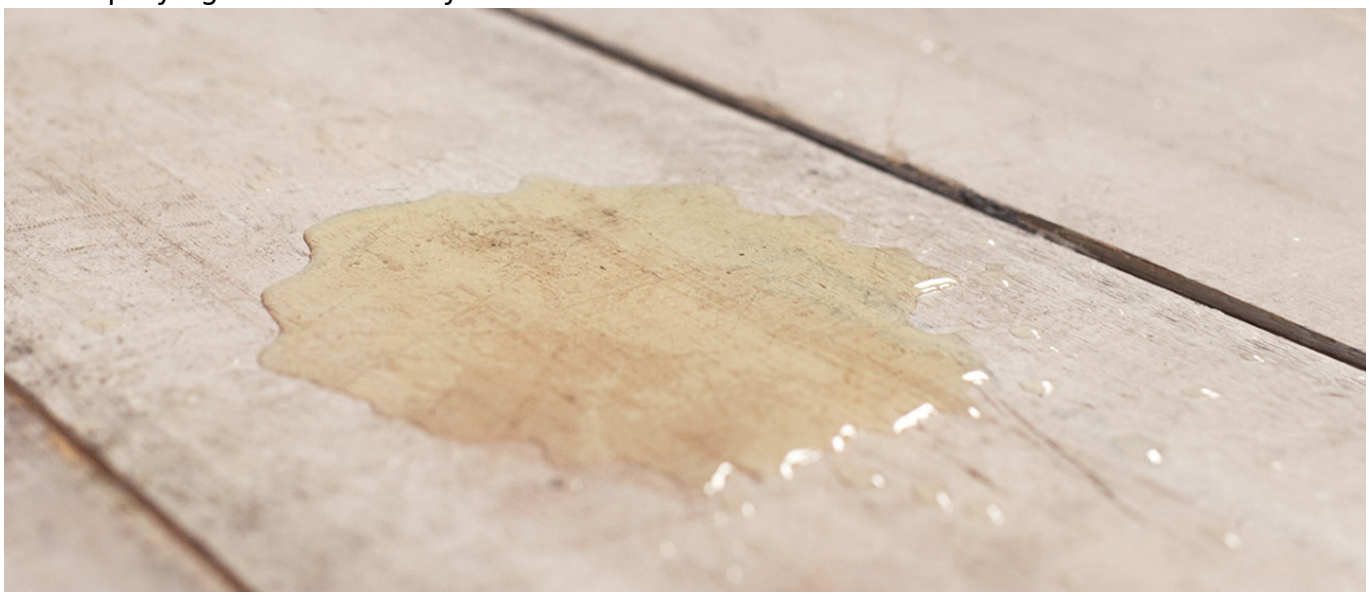
Urine spraying or cat litter tray avoidance? How to tell the difference



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Litter box avoidance and urine spraying are easily confused. After all they both result in cat pee where you'd rather it wasn't! To make things even more complicated, while they might have very different causes, they can both be a result of cat anxiety.

Here we show you how to tell if your furry friend has a problem with their litter tray or is urine spraying or marking. We've also got advice on what to do about both.

What are you dealing with?

Here are a few pointers that will help you to determine whether your cat is spraying or avoiding their cat litter box:

- A cat that's spraying/marking will still use their litter boxes regularly (for urinating and defecating).
- Inappropriate elimination usually happens on horizontal surfaces, such as the floor whereas a spraying cat will normally aim for vertical surfaces such as the furniture or full-length curtains.
- If you can catch your furry friend in the act of spraying, they'll be standing with their

tail straight up and possibly quivering.
- Cats rarely mark with poop, just pee.

Convinced it’s a litter tray avoidance issue?

If you think your furry friend has stopped using their litter tray but isn’t spraying, the most likely explanation is that they have an issue with their cat litter, the litter tray or where it’s positioned. Yes, cats are quite particular creatures! Have you recently changed their litter or litter tray? Or is the litter tray somewhere too busy or noisy or too near to their food and water bowls?

If none of these things are the problem, it could be that something has upset your cat’s equilibrium. For more advice check out Help, my cat is refusing to use the cat litter tray.

Think it’s urine spraying?

- If you think your cat is spraying/marking, it’s helpful to understand some of the most common reasons behind this:
- It’s about mating: Male cats who haven’t been neutered will use spraying as a way to attract and mate and neutering will normally stop the spraying.
- It’s about territory: Territory is very important to cats. If you’ve ever wondered why they rub themselves against things, for instance, it’s because they’re marking their territory. Spraying is another type of marking. Instead of rubbing their faces on something, cats spray urine on it which leaves it with their own individual scent. Think of it like a (stinky) calling card.
- It’s about change or conflict: Some cats spray because there’s been a change to their environment. You’ve moved house, for example, or even just moved around the furniture (yes, really!). And, of course, it’s not just about the physical setting - the addition of a new cat, dog or baby to the family will be a big change for your cat to adjust to.

What to do about urine spraying (and what not to do)

- It’s never a bad idea to chat to your vet. Occasionally a cat who is spraying might have a medical problem and you want to start by ruling this out.
- If you’ve got more than one cat, you’ll want to work out who is doing the spraying. Be aware that just because you catch one of them in the act, it doesn’t mean the other cat isn’t spraying too (albeit more discreetly!).
- Don’t shout at your cat or punish them as this will be counter productive.
- Think about what’s causing your cat to spray so that, where possible, you can address the underlying issue.
- Clean up any areas that have been sprayed using an enzymatic cleaner designed to deal with urine stains and odour.
- After cleaning, you might want to apply a synthetic pheromone to any area that’s been sprayed. Your vet will be able to recommend one.
- Cats often spray repeatedly in one place because they’re keeping their odour ‘topped up’. If you can move things that are a target, it’s not a bad idea. Your new full-length silk curtains will be safer if they’re pinned up off the floor, for example.
- Keep an eye on your cat’s general behaviour and ensure all their needs are being met and they’re not under any stress you can alleviate.

And finally …

As cat owners we tend to love our feline friend’s little quirks, but urine spraying is one foible that’s harder to find endearing! If nothing you do stops your cat from spraying, you might want to get advice from a qualified cat behaviourist.

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