

Urinary Problems in Cats

by Susan Moss, All The Best Pet Care

A common problem for cats is Feline Urological Syndrome (FUS), an inflammation of the lining of the bladder and/or the urethra. It's caused by the formation of struvite mineral deposits in the urinary tract. Symptoms are increased frequency of urination, and discomfort and strain during urination due to a partial blockage of the urethra. Blood in the urine, crying in the litterbox, and urinating outside the box are tip-offs. It's most common in neutered males, but occurs in females as well. If left untreated, total blockage may occur, resulting in death. A cat with symptoms of FUS should be seen right away by a veterinarian, who can unblock the passages, and will often prescribe an antibiotic to combat any secondary bladder infection.

Dietary Factors: Since both the causes and the prevention of this problem are dietary in nature, cats should be fed a diet aimed at preventing the onset of this condition.

1. **Feed a cat food high in animal protein.** Flesh foods maintain an acidic pH in the urinary tract, keeping the minerals dissolved in the urine so they can be excreted out. Most dry foods are high in grain proteins from wheat and corn, which are alkalyzing. Meat-based foods are better than grain-based foods! Raw meat diets are best at preventing FUS, followed by canned foods, which contain more meat and fewer grains than dry food. Some dry foods especially designed for FUS prevention are **Pinnacle Feline**, **Wellness Feline**, and **Innova Feline Light**, all containing cranberries, which have been found to protect the bladder and urethral linings, and **Wysong Uretic**, containing DL-methionine, an acidifying amino acid.

2. **Feed a cat food low in ash and magnesium.** "Ash" refers to the total mineral content of a food. It gets its name from the laboratory procedure used to measure mineral content -burning a sample at high heat until nothing is left but the mineral ash. The major minerals calcium, phosphorus, and magnesium are all necessary for life, so "ashless" cat food is not desirable. The right amount and balance of minerals are necessary. Excessive minerals, and especially excessive magnesium (a major component of the struvite crystals) are thought to be underlying factors in FUS. In dry foods, look for less than 7% ash, and 1% magnesium. In wet foods (containing 78% water) look for less than 1.5% ash and .02% magnesium.

3. **Use a supplement that promotes good urinary health.** Both Vitamin C and the amino acid DL-methionine are natural urinary acidifiers. Cranberry extract can prevent harmful bacteria from attaching to the bladder wall to cause infection. These three ingredients are combined with highly active digestive enzymes in Enzymes pH, our supplement for cats prone to urinary irritations. Wysong Biotic pH also acidifies the urinary tract.

4. **Make sure your cat drinks enough water.** Dilution of the urine is a frequently overlooked factor in FUS. Cats who eat only dry food may be chronically dehydrated, without sufficient fluids in their systems to flush the kidneys. In nature, cats get most of their fluids from their juicy prey, and don't have an instinct for water drinking. The simplest route to correcting dehydration is to feed a wet food diet, or provide a cascading water fountain that encourages cats to drink. Place water away from food, because cats are more likely to use a water source away from their "kill".

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