

What is it?

FIC is a condition in cats involving the lower urinary tract (the bladder and urethra). It occurs most commonly in young to middle-aged cats that are overweight and lead a sedentary lifestyle. The clinical signs we see due to cystitis (inflammation of the bladder) include;

- Difficult or painful urination (they may strain, repeatedly scratch the litter box and/or cry out in pain)
- Increased frequency of urination, often smaller amounts
- Blood in the urine
- Urinating outside of the litter tray
- Overgrooming around their back end
- Straining with inability to pass urine (mostly male cats due to a blockage)



FIC occurs without an obvious underlying cause; however, these cats quite commonly have a number of similar abnormalities which can contribute and exacerbate the disease;

- Stress - quite often an episode of FIC is triggered by a stressful event e.g. other cats, redecorating, moving house etc., and is commonly seen in solely indoor cats or cats in multi-cat households. These cats often also have an inappropriate reaction to stressful events
- Deficient bladder lining (insufficient mucus layer made up of glycosaminoglycans (GAGs) that protect the bladder wall)
- Inflammation caused by stimulation of local nerves to the bladder via the brain due to stress

Blocked Cats

Urethral obstruction (also known as a blocked bladder) is when a blockage occurs of the urethra (the tube that leads from the bladder to the outside). It almost exclusively happens in male cats and is a life-threatening condition. This is a medical emergency and if you suspect your cat may be blocked please **contact us ASAP**. This blockage can occur as a result of FIC or urinary stones, with stress being a contributing factor.

Clinical Signs

- Straining in the litter tray unproductively (which can look like constipation)
- Vocalising, especially when in the litter tray
- Licking around back end and a painful abdomen.
- Small amounts of blood stained urine
- Refusing food and water
- Vomiting

Treatment generally involves blood tests and general anaesthetic to enable placement of a urinary catheter to empty the bladder and sometimes imaging such as an X-ray or ultrasound. These cats usually stay with us for a few days with the catheter in place, on intravenous fluid therapy, so we can monitor urine output and start them on pain relief and medication to help with the underlying causes.

Management

1. Increasing water intake - this is very important as it helps to produce more dilute urine. This can be done by feeding a wet diet, increasing the number of water bowls in the house or use of a cat water fountain.
2. Decreasing stressors - increasing the number of litter trays (should be number of cats +1), making sure the litter trays aren't too near their feeding area, making the trays more private (e.g. placing a cardboard box over tray with a hole cut out for entry), using a cat pheromone diffuser e.g. feliway.
3. Weight loss/increasing activity - encouraging play with toys and use of scratch posts
4. Glycosaminoglycan (GAGs) supplements – to help support the bladder lining
5. Dietary Management - cats are less likely to have a recurrence if on wet food and if we change them onto a specific urinary diet. These diets change the composition of the urine to help prevent urine sludging, crystal formation or bacterial infection, they also contain anti-anxiety compounds. Diets need to be introduced slowly - this can be done by mixing it with their old diet. Your vet will recommend a prescription diet if they feel your cat would benefit from it.

