



INTERNAL MEDICINE:

Feline Idiopathic Cystitis

Definition

Feline idiopathic cystitis (FIC) is a diagnosis of exclusion, which means that all other possible causes of the urinary bladder disorder must be excluded before the diagnosis of FIC can be made. The older term “feline urologic syndrome” (FUS) and the newer “feline lower urinary tract disease” (FLUTD) are umbrella terms used to describe a constellation of feline urinary tract disorders, including FIC.

Clinical Signs

Clinical signs of FIC include hematuria, stranguria, dysuria, pollakiuria, and periuria (a newly coined word for urinating in “inappropriate” places. It is important to note that although the behavior is inappropriate to cat caretakers, it is not inappropriate behavior for the cat. This is because cats with FIC have very valid reasons for choosing not to use their litter boxes.

Misconceptions

It is important not to be misled into thinking that a urinary tract infection (UTI) is responsible for the clinical signs. UTIs are extremely rare in cats younger than 10 years old, unlike dogs. Only 1-3% of young to middle age cats are diagnosed with a UTI. This helps to explain why antibiotics do not help resolve the problem. Sometimes antibiotics may appear to help, but this is only coincidental, as the clinical signs of FIC often subside on their own in 4-7 days, regardless of treatment initiatives. Unfortunately, clinical signs of FIC recur within 6-12 months in about 50% of cats.

Another misconception is that crystals found in the urine of cats with FIC are responsible for clinical signs. Crystals are normally found in feline urine, particularly when it is highly concentrated. Crystals also form readily in refrigerated urine, and urine is often refrigerated before undergoing study by the laboratory. Crystals are seen in the urine of healthy cats, as well as those with FIC, and do not play a role in the development of FIC. However, extremely large quantities of crystals may irritate an already damaged bladder wall.

Treatment

Since the cause of FIC is not well understood, it probably comes as no surprise that there are no easy solutions to resolving the clinical signs of FIC. A multimodal approach has proved to be most effective, and is described below. It is important to remember that all changes must be introduced very slowly, or the mere act of change will cause additional stress.

- **Increased water consumption:** The easiest way to increase water consumption, and the only treatment that has been proved to help reduce signs of FIC, is to feed canned food exclusively.
- **Litter box management:** As mentioned, a cat with FIC often associates pain with the litter box, so creative thinking is often required to lure the cat back to using the box consistently.
- **Environmental enrichment:** A multi-pronged approach should be taken to make an indoor environment more stimulating for cats.
- **Cleaning urine stains:** It is important to remove all urine odor from locations where the cat has urinated, or the cat will continue to return to the soiled area to urinate.
- **Managing pain:** FIC is a painful condition, and pain management must be considered.
- **Pheromotherapy:** Feliway
- **Mood altering substances:** Catnip, honeysuckle or valerian root.

Internal Medicine**Experts:**

Ned F. Kuehn, DVM,
MS, DACVIM

Marc Elie, DVM,
DACVIM

Lauren Boyd, DVM,
DACVIM

Kristopher Sharpe,
DVM, DACVIM

Jenna Ashton, DVM

Jim Whitehead, DVM

MVS offers full-time internal medicine service at BOTH HOSPITALS and our internists serve as an extension of your practice. Internal medicine service is offered at Auburn Hills Tues.-Fri. and in Southfield Mon.-Fri. Our clinicians have years of specialized training and experience. Please let us know how we can help you and your clients.

Questions?

Our internists are available for questions and consultations on medical conditions. They are also on-call for in-house consultation on medicine cases seen through the emergency service. Our internists review critical medical cases.

Locations

3412 East Walton Boulevard
Auburn Hills, MI 48326
Ph. (248) 371-3713

29080 Inkster Road
Southfield, MI 48076
Ph. (248) 354-6660