



## Reducing Urine Marking in Cats

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*The first step with any behavioral issue is to take your cat to the veterinarian for a full evaluation. Cats are very stoic animals and will hide illness and injury. Sometimes our only clue that something is physically wrong is a behavioral symptom. Many behavioral modification programs can begin in conjunction with or shortly after your trip to the veterinarian.*

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Cats will spray for three reasons: marking territory, to help them feel secure, or because they are in conflict with another cat. Is your cat neutered/spayed? 90% of cats reduce spraying within 30 days of being neutered. Was your cat previously an outdoor cat? Are there other cats in the home? *See also the article on Cats in Conflict.* Are there any cats in your neighborhood that walk around? *See also the article on managing outdoor cats.*

Determine if your cat is spraying or urinating outside the box. A cat who is urine marking will typically back up to a vertical surface. You will see the tail held upright and quiver and the front paws may knead. You will find a small amount of urine on the vertical surface and usually running down to the floor. The areas a cat chooses to mark are typically common paths the cats are walking in the house, the perimeter of the home, or around windows and doors. A cat who is not using the litter box will leave a large puddle on a horizontal surface. *See also the article on litter box aversion.*

Your first step will be cleaning: Try using an enzyme based cleaner on the area. If the area is carpet can you pull it back and #1 replace the pad #2 get to the wood underlay. Once you get to the wood you need to get hydrogen peroxide or white vinegar and soak a rag or towel and place it directly on the affected area and place something heavy on top. The hydrogen peroxide will pull the urine out of the wood. You may need to change the rag or towel and reapply. If you attempt this with a finished hardwood floor the stain may also come up if you aren't careful about the timing so try vinegar. The vinegar mixture should be 1.5 cups warm water and .5 cups of white vinegar. You can also sprinkle baking soda on top of the area once it has dried to absorb any remaining smell. (You should not use vinegar on marble or stone.) You can actually see and smell the urine on the towel so it is quite remarkable! Don't forget to clean the walls! You can purchase a hand held black light to see the urine more clearly so you make sure it is completely gone from that area. In cases of spraying even removing and cleaning behind base boards might be necessary.

Buy puppy pee pads and place those in areas where he sprays to reduce the chance you will need to clean again. Remember the spray is going up the wall most likely so you may have to get painters tape and put the pee pad on vertically. The next step will be to place a tall cat scratcher

in front of the areas being sprayed and place either a food dish or a water bowl next to it. Scratching is another (more acceptable to us humans) way to mark territory. There should be a scratcher for each cat in your case. Cats also do not like to pee where they eat or drink so adding the food and water to those areas might also help. It will also help to have multiple feedings and watering stations so they don't have to feel uncomfortable about those resources. It may look silly for a few weeks but they need to associate those areas with scratching, food, water and finally with playing. The last portion will be to start playing with them in those areas to build confidence. Remember that we are trying to break a habit here so it may be a few weeks of this setup. If another incident occurs simply replace the pee pads. We are hoping for a reduction of the behavior as they begin to feel more confident. Only remove them after several weeks of no spraying in that area.

If you see the cat sniffing around in the areas that have previously been sprayed, interrupt the sniffing by distracting the cat with a toy or a treat. Consider re-cleaning the area in case the smell remains. *See also modifying the environment for your cat.*

***If after trying these suggestions you are still experiencing undesirable behaviors in your cat, SUBMIT QUESTIONS by clicking the link under Ask A Trainer on the Behavior and Training page of the Wayside Waifs website: [www.waysidewaifs.org](http://www.waysidewaifs.org).***

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