



FELINE IDIOPATHIC CYSTITIS HOME MANAGEMENT

Feline Idiopathic Cystitis (FIC) is a very common condition of cats and has complex causes, but with a few key alterations to the cat's home, this frustrating condition can often be successfully managed.

LITTER FACILITIES

Probably the most important factor to consider is appropriate indoor litter facilities, which are desirable from the perspective of a cat, rather than what might look or smell most attractive to the owner. Latrine, or toilet facilities, are considered an important resource to a cat and should be supplied so that no threat or competition is felt by the cat when at its most vulnerable.

- Have one tray per cat plus one extra, located in separate secluded areas away from busy thoroughfares and noisy appliances. Ensure a tray is available on each floor of the house.
- *Open or closed?* Some cats have a preference for one type over another – closed trays enhance privacy, whilst open trays allow complete visualisation of perceived threats. If using a closed tray, ensure the door flap is removed as this can be one obstacle too many for a nervous cat.
- Trays should be rectangular shaped and approximately 1.5 times the length of the cat from nose to base of tail.
- *Type of litter?* Most cats tend to prefer fine grain litter with a sand-like consistency which mimics a natural latrine substrate (*cats are desert-dwelling species*). Avoid scented litters and deodorisers which can upset a cat's sensitive sense of smell.
- Ensure an adequate depth of litter – 3-4 cm is generally preferred to allow natural digging behaviour.
- Remove dirty litter / clumps and faeces as soon as possible (*at least daily*) and top up with fresh litter. Fully clean and disinfect the tray on a weekly basis, using a cleaner that is safe for cats.
- Avoid polythene liners which can catch a cat's claws causing the litter to spray upwards which is unpleasant and may cause a negative association with the tray.
- Ensure feeding bowls and water bowls are not sited near trays as this may discourage a cat to eliminate there.
- Ensure children and dogs are not allowed to disturb a cat whilst using the litter tray, and do not attempt to give a cat medication whilst in the tray as they may subsequently feel too vulnerable to use the tray in the future.

KEY POINT:

Use the golden rule of **“one per cat plus one extra”** when choosing the number of litter trays and other resources in the home!



INCREASING WATER INTAKE

Increasing water intake is desirable for cats suffering from FIC, to help dilute the urine and reduce irritation to the urinary tract.

- Feed a wet diet.
- Add water to the food – start off with small amounts to avoid reducing the palatability.
- Offer flavoured broths, such as the water that meat has been boiled in or spring water from a tin of tuna. Broths may also be made into ice cubes and added to the drinking water.
- *Consider bowl type* – many cats prefer ceramic or glass bowls over plastic which can taint the water. Metal bowls can startle some cats due to the reflections. Use wide-brimmed bowls so that the whiskers do not touch the side and ensure they are filled to the brim so the cat does not have to lower its head into the bowl.

TIP:

As desert-dwellers, cats are “wired” to drink when the opportunity arises – by placing water bowls in the hallway or on a window sill where the cat often sits you may encourage your cat to take a lick whenever they pass the bowl!



- Have multiple bowls located around the house, positioned away from food bowls and litter trays. Ensure easy access in areas frequented by the cat and offer bowls in high places (*such as a window sill*) where the cat can survey its surroundings at the same time as drinking.
- Some cats prefer flowing water – commercial water fountains are available or an accessible tap can be left dripping slowly.
- Consider type of water – some cats prefer bottled water or rain water to tap water.

If you have any questions about your pets, call us on 01325 620968 or ask a member of our team