



## IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE



### 1. FELINE IDIOPATHIC CYSTITIS – More than a bladder problem

Although many different diseases can affect the lower urinary tract, frustratingly, a number of cats develop a disease without any obvious underlying cause – so called 'feline idiopathic cystitis' or FIC. This form of disease appears to bear many similarities to a disease in humans called 'interstitial cystitis', but in both cats and humans it can be difficult to manage.

### 2. FELINE STRESS IN A NUTSHELL

Why does it occur, how can it be recognized, and what can be done to alleviate it?

### 3. BIG BENEFITS OF SMALL DOG DAYCARE

To meet the needs of small dogs and their owners, a number of day care and boarding facilities exclusive to tiny dogs have emerged in recent years. They have proven to be a triple-win for the owners of these businesses, their clients and small dogs everywhere.

## FELINE IDIOPATHIC CYSTITIS (FIC) – MORE THAN A BLADDER PROBLEM

Although many different diseases can affect the lower urinary tract, frustratingly, a number of cats develop a disease without any obvious underlying cause – so called 'feline idiopathic cystitis' or FIC. This form of disease appears to bear many similarities to a disease in humans called 'interstitial cystitis', but in both cats and humans it can be difficult to manage.

### Diagnosis of FIC

Importantly, at present, there is no diagnostic test that will confirm a cat is suffering from FIC, and so a diagnosis can only be made by excluding other recognised causes of FIC. This means that cats should be investigated thoroughly through:

- Analysis and bacterial culture of urine sample
- X-rays of the bladder (including contrast studies)
- Possibly ultrasound of the bladder

In cats with FIC, analysis of a urine sample may show the presence of blood and inflammatory cells, but there is no recognisable underlying cause (e.g., bladder stones or infection) to explain these changes. It is common to also find microscopic evidence of crystals in urine samples (crystals of either struvite - magnesium ammonium phosphate - or calcium oxalate most commonly). However, these crystals are not the cause of the cystitis (bladder inflammation) and can be found in cats both with and without FIC as cats often produce very concentrated urine (within which the crystals can form).

### What causes FIC?

By definition, FIC is a disease of unknown cause. However, a number of abnormalities appear to be common in cats with FIC and may contribute to the disease:

- Stress – there is good evidence to suggest that stress plays an important role in FIC.
- Abnormal stress responses – not only is there good evidence that stress plays a role in provoking FIC in affected cats, there is also evidence that these cats do not handle stress in a 'normal' way.
- Multi-cat households
- Some dry diets
- Neurogenic inflammation
- Defective bladder

Changes similar to those described above that are seen in cats with FIC are also seen in humans with interstitial cystitis. It is thus currently thought that FIC may develop in certain individuals that are perhaps genetically programmed to respond to stress in a slightly abnormal way, and perhaps also have some local defect in the bladder lining. However, the precise mechanism by which FIC develops is still uncertain.

## What are the clinical signs of FIC?

Clinical signs of FIC are similar to other cases of FLUTD, the most common being:

- Dysuria – difficulty or painful urination
- Pollakiuria – increased frequency of urination
- Haematuria – blood in the urine
- Periuria – urinating outside the litter-box
- Overgrooming – especially around the perineum

With FIC, many cats develop recurrent episodes of clinical signs. They may develop quite rapidly, and then often naturally subside and resolve over 5-10 days, only to recur again later. In severe cases, the signs can recur rapidly and frequently, and in some cats the signs may persist for long periods. FIC can lead to severe bladder inflammation and the thickened bladder wall that develops may be difficult to distinguish from an underlying tumour without a biopsy.

## Management of FIC

It has been shown that the best approach to managing cats with FIC is to use multimodal treatment – this simply means making a number of different changes to help reduce the likelihood of recurrent episodes of FIC. Although drug therapy might be used, and might be helpful in some situations, this is not really a drug-responsive disease. Many drugs may initially appear to work, because the clinical signs tend to resolve spontaneously in most affected cats, but long-term studies have suggested few, if any, drugs have any real impact on this disease. Rather, it is important to concentrate on the diet and the environment, recognising that these aspects have a crucial role to play.

## Dietary modification for cats with FIC

Encouraging more frequent urination and producing urine that is more dilute (and therefore potentially less irritant to the cells lining the bladder) appears to be helpful in FIC. This can be achieved, at least in part, by modifying the diet. Changing to a wet (tinned or sachet) diet rather than a dry diet is an important management goal, along with other measures to increase water intake.

In addition to the water content of the food, some veterinary therapeutic diets (only available from your vet) are designed to help in cases of FLUTD. These diets (e.g. Hill's Feline Stress C/D Prescription cat food) include things like added polyunsaturated fatty acids which potentially may help reduce inflammation in FIC.

Other measures to increase water intake:

- Making sure a good supply of fresh water is always available – cats should be encouraged to drink by offering water from different bowls, etc
- Using flavoured waters (chicken or tuna, for example) or water fountains to encourage drinking
- Adding further water to the food (if tolerated without affecting the appetite)

## Environmental modification – drinking and urinating

Stress plays a very important role in triggering FIC and modifying the environment to help reduce stress and to encourage cats to drink and urinate more frequently are key goals in the management of FIC. It is important that cats are able to take some control of the environment they live in.

## Environmental modification – reducing stress

It is important to try to identify and modify or avoid any specific stress triggers in the environment - this could be another pet in the house, abrupt changes in diet, overcrowding, owner stress, or changes to the people in the house. Where possible, if specific stress triggers are identified, they should be minimised or avoided.

## Prognosis

Recent evidence suggests that if sufficient emphasis is placed on increasing water intake and enriching the environment for cats to relieve boredom and stress, then most cats with FIC will improve significantly. In general, cats will also spontaneously improve as they get older. Some very severe cases may be more difficult to manage though.

*Source: <https://icatcare.org/advice/cat-health/feline-idiopathic-cystitis-fic>*

## Hill's Prescription Diet® c/d Multicare Feline Stress



Hill's Feline Stress C/D Prescription cat food provides a balance of vital nutrition for cats at risk of developing urinary tract issues like bladder stones. Cats require the right amount of minerals in their food to prevent bladder stones from occurring. These are collections of mineral crystals that form together and stick in the urinary tract. This can be painful and cause more serious health issues.

This prescription diet cat food from Hill's was developed by their nutritionists and veterinarians. It was specifically designed to provide a complete and balanced diet that cares for urinary health. The following are benefits of this dry cat food:

- Manages stress through soothing ingredients
- Dissolves struvite stones on an average of 28 days.
- Reduces the risk of calcium oxalate stones

Because Hill's c/d Multicare Feline Stress is a complete food solution, it provides all the nutrition your cat needs. High in potassium and Omega-3, the mix has controlled levels of magnesium, calcium and phosphorus so it promotes the right conditions in your cat for optimal urinary tract health.



## FELINE STRESS IN A NUTSHELL

Many cat owners assume that their cat's relative independence ensures that the cat has a considerable level of choice regarding their encounters with stimuli that could be potential stressors. As a result, a substantial number of cat owners, consider their cat to live a stress-free life. Yet research has found that veterinary surgeons in the UK consider chronic stress to be among the 3 top welfare problems in cats.



### Indicators of feline distress

Signs of acute stress include:	Signs of chronic stress include:
Immobility	Increased resting or 'feigned' sleep
Head – lower than the body, motionless. Jaw may become tense	History of increased dependency on owner
Eyes – fully open	Lack of play activity
Pupils – fully dilated, although pupils may narrow slightly	History of inappropriate urination or breakdown in toilet training
Ears – fully flattened back on the head	Changes in general patterns of behaviour, e.g. spending significantly more time indoors, irrespective of normal seasonal changes
Whiskers – back	Urine spraying indoors
Legs – bent	Displacement activity (repetitive out-of-context behavior)
Tail – close to body	Over-grooming, pica (wool or material eating)
Body – crouched directly on top of all fours, possibly shaking. Back may arch	Extreme vigilance and heightened startle response
Belly – not exposed, rapid breathing	Increased facial rubbing, scratching on surfaces
Vocalisation – plaintive meow, yowling, growling or silent	Inhibition or increase of feeding, grooming, urination and defecation
Hissing, growling, shaking, drooling	Redirected aggression (aggression towards a target that is not the original source of threat)
Involuntary urination, defecation	Ambivalent behavior (approach/withdraw, conflicting signals occurring almost simultaneously)
Actively attempting to hide	History of hiding or social withdrawal.
Aggression if approached	Defensive aggression towards people/cats

### Techniques for enhancing feline welfare in the home

#### 1) Creating a suitable environment

- a. In a multi-cat home, ensure that no cat has to pass another's "territory" to gain access to an essential resource
- b. Enhance any cat's use of a 3D environment in the home – e.g. shelving on walls
- c. Cat "trees" and other raised areas should be varied and plentiful
- d. Enhance the cat's capacity to access areas – even 'single' cats may be wary of outside cats that can be observed from windows, children or visitors
- e. In multi-cat home, ensure that all shelves are wide enough for cats to pass each other and offer sufficient variation in height and angle
- f. Cats prefer to sleep alone
- g. Elderly cats also require the safety of raised areas
- h. If one cat 'guards' the back door area or neighbouring cats use your garden
- i. If cats can see other cats from resting areas or from windows
- j. Prevent outdoor cats from entering the home
- k. If outdoor cats are marking around doorways or lurking there
- l. If other cats are using the garden

#### 2) Allow each cat to be a cat!

- a. Provide plenty of scratch posts in a variety of materials, positions (vertical and horizontal) and rooms. Cat trees can double for this purpose
- b. Place litter trays around the house so no cat has to run the gauntlet past another cat to reach one
- c. Toys should resemble prey – small and furry and feathery
- d. Erratic movement – such as provided by fishing-rod type toys
- e. Play "retrieve"
- f. Teach your cat new tricks and increase mental stimulation
- g. Cats need to feel in control' of a familiar environment, so prevent inappropriate marking by creating familiarity

#### 3) Encouraging appropriate mental stimulation

- a. Meet the need to work for food
- b. Use mental and physical energy
- c. Good pet shops can give advice on a wide array of cat puzzle feeding toys
- d. Cats like to be able to see their food
- e. Cats never choose to eat, drink and toilet in one place
- f. Cats don't like their whiskers to touch the sides of bowls or to lose sight of stimuli approaching them

Source: *The Veterinary Nurse Magazine Vol 8 No 4 May 2017 p.192*

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# BIG BENEFITS OF SMALL – DOG DAYCARE

To meet the needs of small dogs and their owners, a number of day care and boarding facilities exclusive to tiny dogs have emerged in recent years. They have proven to be a triple-win for the owners of these businesses, their clients and small dogs everywhere.

**For small dogs like these and their discerning owners, only the most specialised care will do.**



Janice Chantler decided to place her 6kg Miniature Dachshund, Bailey into doggy daycare. Although she conducted research before placing Bailey in a local doggy day care centre, Janice was horrified when her little dog came home timid and scared. "I could not find an appropriate place for daycare where he was settled, happy and able to improve his socialisation skills, so I decided to create my own," said Janice, who now runs Yappy Days Doggy Daycare in Rockingham.

Janice conceived the business concept several years ago and finally opened her business last week after being told of similar problems. "My friend called a Doggy Day care centre in the city that supposedly had luxury suites for dogs and asked them if they could provide appropriate care for her dog," says Janice. "She mentioned his eyes would need to be cleaned and that he would lick his feet all of the time if he didn't have his booties and so on. I was fully expecting the facility to say, 'Yes, we can do that, but it will cost you extra money.' Instead, they told her she should leave my dog with a veterinarian." It wasn't long afterward that Janice created her business.

## Big Benefits for Small Dogs

Specialised care at small-dog daycare centres may include:

- **Cage-free surroundings.** "Nobody is caged here," Janice says. "Our dogs lounge on comfy beds and bean bags. They can play in our fenced-in social area."
- **Controlled medication.** "Most owners of small-dog daycare operations ask that owners bring the pet's regular medication. Consistency is key to comfort", says Janice.
- **Extra security.** "Tiny dogs can squeeze through chain-link fences and other barriers that can hold back larger dogs. Small-dog day care centre operators take precautions to ensure their charges stay safe and secure, do your research and be sure your pet is safe", says Janice

• **Luxury additions.** "We have a nice thick rubber floor in the social area" says Janice "it minimises stress on small doggy joints and some breeds, especially Chihuahuas which often get cold feet," she explains.

## Questions to Ask

Before you take your dog to any day care or boarding facility, do your research. Word-of-mouth recommendations are always best, but consider asking these questions:

1. What size dogs do you take? Depending on the facility, caregivers may limit their services to dogs weighing over 20 kg. Exceptions sometimes are made, contingent upon the breed, behaviour and requirements of the dog.
2. How many years have you been in business, and what other experience with small dogs do you have? Janice Chantler has decades of experience with small dogs. Be sure you get the background of the individual person running the day care or boarding facility.
3. Do you train dogs too? Some Day Care facilities, like Yappy Days, offer training and housetraining instruction. Yappy days recommends the use of positive reinforcement training techniques.
4. Do you own small dogs? "Ask how the person's own dogs are cared for, in terms of feeding, grooming, medical care and other essentials," advises Janice. "How the owner treats his or her own dogs can indicate how your dog will be cared for."
5. What if there's an emergency? Janice and her team have established a relationship with their local veterinarians and they may also be able to take your dog to its regular vet.

Finally, listen for the passion in the person's voice. Most people go into this line of work, because they truly adore dogs, especially tiny breeds.

**NOW OPEN**



**YAPPY DAYS**

Small doggy daycare

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Unit 3, 7 Day Road, Rockingham [yappydaysrockingham.com](http://yappydaysrockingham.com)

## PORT KENNEDY Veterinary Hospital



### ADDRESS

1/9 Fielden Way,  
Port Kennedy WA 6172  
(just off Warnbro Sound Ave)

**Telephone:** 08 9524 6644

**Fax:** 08 9524 6626

**Email:** [admin@portkennedyvet.com.au](mailto:admin@portkennedyvet.com.au)

**Web:** [www.portkennedyvet.com.au](http://www.portkennedyvet.com.au)

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