



Resolving cat spraying issues...

Background

Many thousands of cats spray in the house. The problem usually stems from them being unhappy in one way or another.

Their unhappiness can be caused by many things but the bottom line is that they usually think that their territory is threatened in some way.

The threat may come from another cat especially a new cat in the area), the smell of a cat that used to live in the house, fear of a person or particular type of person, e.g. men or women, adults or children.

Exactly where the problem stems from can be difficult to detect but the things that you should look for are changes that were happening at the time the spraying started.

In some cases it is sufficient to remove the cause of the unhappiness or to rearrange things so that the cat doesn't have to come into contact with it.

Things to try first

Very often a cat will start spraying, then the problem goes away but the spraying has become a habit and so it continues. If you think this is the case then you can try cleaning the affected area with a solution of biological washing powder in warm water, to remove much of the smell.

Once the area is dry, use surgical spirit on the area to mask the smell of the remaining scent. It is very important not to use any products that contain bleach as this can encourage spraying.

It can also help to place small dishes of dried food at the spraying areas because some cats don't like to spray on top of their food.

If the problem persists

If the problem continues, there is another strategy you can try. Because cats spray to try and ensure a safe territory, reducing their territory to a size they can cope with can sometimes be a start to a change in behaviour.

Use a room such as a spare bedroom and equip it with litter tray and a bed. Your cat should stay in this room 24hrs a day for anything up to a couple of months.

Whilst this may seem strange to us, we must remember that a cat's anxiety and spraying is largely controlled by the confidence they have in maintaining control of their territory.

In order to regain some control, reducing their territory can have a very beneficial effect on their anxiety levels.

Visits to the room should be limited to one person and only a few of times a day, for feeding and grooming.

Generally you should find that the spraying stops within a couple of days. If it does then anxiety over territory is almost certainly the cause.

Expanding the territory

Once you feel that your cat feels safe and secure in her reduced territory, you can start to increase it very slowly. Start by bringing them outside the door for feeding, and then over a period of a couple of months gradually bring them out for longer periods.

If you find that the spraying starts again after they have been re-introduced, it may be worth looking again for the cause of their anxiety or going back a step in the territory reduction procedure and expanding the territory slower than before.