

FELINE LOWER URINARY TRACT DISEASE

Feline lower urinary tract disease can be a painful and recurring condition that can be potentially life-threatening if left untreated. It is a condition more commonly associated with male cats (both undesexed and desexed male cats) but can also be seen in female cats. Older cats are also more at risk of developing urinary tract infections and disease. The condition can involve infection of the bladder (cystitis), urolithiasis (stones in the urinary tract) and blockage of the urinary tract. The symptoms of this condition are characterized by painful urination and cats may be seen to strain to urinate, vocalize while toileting, produce frequent small amounts of urine (sometimes with blood) and go to the toilet outside of the litterbox or in unusual places. Cats can also be lethargic, depressed, drink more than normal and lick at their genital area frequently. In the case of a blockage the cat may be in severe shock and collapse.

Severe urinary tract infections and inflammation of the tract can result in obstruction of the urinary tract with blockage of the passage of urine. In such cases the bladder can rupture and the animal can die as a result. Diagnosis of the condition may involve analysis of urine, a blood test to check blood parameters and kidney function, palpation of the abdomen to identify a distended bladder, imaging of the cat's abdomen including x-ray and/or ultrasound to look for potential blockages and lesions and catheterization of the cat's bladder under anaesthetic to locate and alleviate a possible obstruction. Cats that are showing signs of shock, dehydration and renal damage generally require intravenous fluid support and hospitalization. Other treatments of feline urinary tract disease include antibiotics and modified diets in the case of urolithiasis (bladder stones). Dietary changes can alter the acidity, magnesium and calcium content of the urine which may be desirable in cases of urolithiasis involving these minerals.

Feline urinary tract disease can be a life-threatening condition if not identified and treated early. If you suspect your cat may be showing symptoms contact your veterinarian immediately.

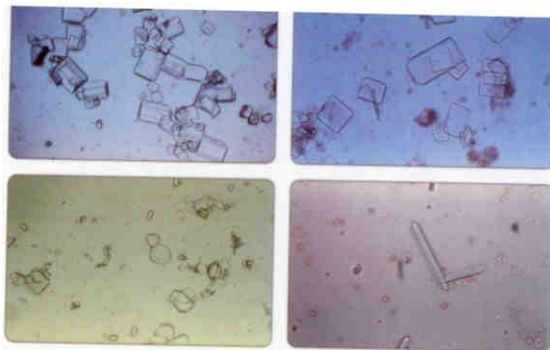


Figure 1: Crystals under a microscope

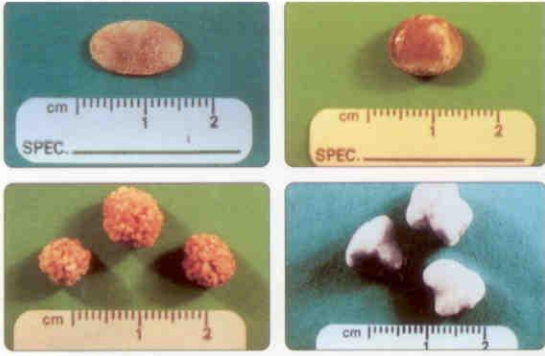


Figure 2: Uroliths (stones) from a bladder