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When tiddles can't piddle

Feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD) is not a specific disease, but rather an umbrella term used to describe conditions that can affect the urinary bladder and/or urethra (the lower urinary tract) of cats.

It is often difficult or impossible to determine the underlying cause without doing further investigations as all tend to present with similar clinical signs. A number of cats may develop the condition without an obvious underlying cause; this is known as 'feline idiopathic cystitis'.

Signs of FLUTD

Symptoms of FLUTD can be varied so you may see one or more of the following signs:

- **Difficult or painful urination (dysuria)** - straining to pass urine, possibly crying out.
- **Increased frequency of urination (pollakiuria)** - often only small amounts of urine.
- **Blood in the urine (haematuria)** - the blood may be visible by eye or may only be visible upon microscopic examination.
- **Urinating outside the litterbox/unusual places (Periuria)** - pain, irritation and inflammation causes an urgent need to urinate. Often cats may wee in the bath!
- **Over-grooming** - pain and irritation in the bladder/urethra may trigger some cats to over groom their tummy/back end. This can result in loss of hair.
- **Behavioural changes** - such as aggression, irritation, restlessness.
- **Blockage to the urethra (stranguria)** - cats will strain to urinate but no urine is passed. This is usually a problem for male cats due to their longer and narrower urethra. If you notice that your cat cannot wee, this is an EMERGENCY and you should contact your vet immediately.



Which cats are the most at risk of FLUTD?

Cats of any age, breed and gender can be affected by FLUTD, but in general, the disease is more common in:

- Middle-aged male cats
- Neutered cats
- Over-weight cats
- Cats which do not exercise enough
- Housecats
- Cats that eat a dry diet

Causes of FLUTD

FLUTD is commonly caused by one or several of the following:

- **Idiopathic cystitis** - 60-70% of cats with FLUTD have no identifiable underlying cause. This is known as 'feline idiopathic cystitis'. This means 'inflammation of the bladder without a known cause'. It is commonly associated with stress.
- **Urinary crystals/bladder stones (urolithiasis)** - this covers 10-15% of FLUTD cases, commonly 'magnesium ammonium phosphate' (or 'struvite') and 'calcium oxalate'. Crystals/stones can cause inflammation of the bladder and can block the urethra.
- **Bacterial infections (bacterial cystitis)** - relatively uncommon in cats, this covers 5-15% of FLUTD cases. More frequent in older cats.
- **Urethral plugs** - usually male cats. Proteins, cells,

We are open seven days a week:

Mon - Fri, 8.00am - 7pm

Sat, 8.30am - 5.30pm

Sun, 10am - 1pm

Molecare Pet Vets (office hours): 01626 835002
EVES Emergency Service (out of hours): 01392 284217

molecarepetvets.com

When tiddles can't piddle continued...

crystals and debris in the urine can amalgamate to form a plug that blocks the urethra.

- **Bladder cancer** - thankfully very rare in cats. A greater risk for old cats.

Diagnosis of FLUTD

Many cases of FLUTD can be assessed based on history, clinical signs and a urine sample. However, sometimes diagnosis can be more complex, and more diagnostic tests are required.

- **Urinalysis** - analysing the urine. Urine is either collected using special non-absorbable cat litter or via placing a fine needle into the bladder through the skin (cystocentesis). The sample is checked for signs of crystals, inflammatory cells and bacteria among other things.
- **X-rays** - some bladder stones are easily visible on X-rays, but some require 'contrast radiography' whereby a contrast dye is introduced into the bladder via a catheter. This can help show up some bladder stones, tumours or urethral structures (narrowing).
- **Ultrasound** - this can help identify bladder stones and changes to the bladder wall.
- **Biopsies** - not commonly needed. Generally performed if there is the possibility of a tumour.



Prevention and treatment of FLUTD

Treatment of FLUTD will depend on the underlying cause. Changes to management can help with prevention of all causes of FLUTD.

Preventions include:

- **Reducing stress** - stress is a massive contributor to FLUTD in cats. Many cats will only show very subtle signs of stress that are easily missed. A lot of owners are totally unaware that their cat is stressed, and it can be due to things as simple as a new cat on the block or a change in room décor or layout. Subtle signs include sleeping more, spending more time inside/outside than usual or misbehaving. Products such as Feliway and PetRemedy are invaluable to reduce stress for your cat. [Our resident cat relaxation guru, Rachel, offers stress clinics to work out how to mellow out your moggy.](#)
- **Increasing water intake** - multiple water bowls around the house of varying shapes and sizes. Some cats prefer running water such as a running tap or a cat water fountain.
- **Wet food** - this is a controversial one. Dry food

is thought to be better for your pet's teeth and has more nutrition per gram, however wet food provides more moisture and water intake so is considered better for the urinary system.

- **Encouraging frequent urination** - the general rule is one more litter tray in the house than the number of cats and keep them spotlessly clean! If your cat prefers to urinate outside, try to minimise disruption such as dramatic changes to the garden or causes of fear/avoidance. Make sure there is a litter tray in the house even if your cat prefers outside...just in case!
- **Weight loss** - obesity is a massive contributor to FLUTD susceptibility. Make sure your cat is at its optimum weight to reduce the risk of this condition. Arrange a nurse weight clinic to discuss the best ways to reduce your cat's weight via changes in diet, exercise and treats.

Treatments may include:

- **Non-steroidal anti-inflammatories** - to reduce the inflammation in the irritated bladder and urethral wall and reduce pain.
- **Nutraceuticals** - these promote a healthy bladder wall and encourage repair of the bladder lining.
- **A veterinary diet** - to dissolve crystals.
- **Antibiotics if bacteria seen** - the vet may request that the urine is sent for culture and sensitivity tests to determine the most appropriate antibiotic.
- **Surgery to remove bladder stones** or correct urethral strictures.
- **Chemotherapy** or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs for bladder cancers.

Blocked bladder

Obstructions of the urethra (the tube leading from the bladder to the outside world) are an EMERGENCY. Acute kidney failure can occur in days so rapid unblocking of the urethra is vital. Remember, if your cat is unable to urinate, you must visit your vet IMMEDIATELY.

Treatment involves blood tests to check kidney function and electrolytes, pain relief, emergency anaesthesia to place a urinary catheter and fluid therapy via a drip. This can be a difficult and delicate procedure and far too painful to perform consciously. The catheter should ideally stay in for a period of time whilst hospitalised as the urethra is very prone to spasm and re-blocking in the days afterwards.

If you are concerned that your cat is struggling with urination, contact us on 01626 835002.

Dental disease in rabbits

One of the most common problems we see with pet rabbits is dental disease. This can be a debilitating condition which ultimately can lead to euthanasia.

Rabbit's teeth

Rabbits have incisors at the front of their mouth that are used for slicing food (which you can see as an owner), and premolars/molars (cheek teeth) at the back of the mouth that are used to grind down fibrous plant material such as hay.

On average, rabbit teeth grow continuously at a rate of 2mm per week. It is the action of grinding down fibrous foods that keeps the teeth worn down appropriately. If the teeth are abnormally aligned, or an incorrect diet is fed, these teeth may not wear down as they should which cause a multitude of problems.

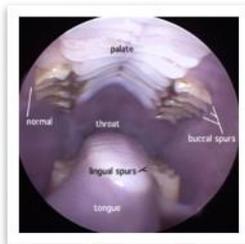
What causes dental disease in rabbits?

Dental disease in rabbits can be complex and is often due to a combination of issues.

Genetics - Wild rabbits have evolved to have well aligned teeth and good quality bone. Our pet rabbits are often bred for appearance and temperament rather than dentistry and this means they are predisposed to problems such as misalignment of teeth. Miniature breeds and lion heads are most at risk. If the teeth are not perfectly aligned, some areas of the tooth will not wear down, allowing a sharp point (spur) to develop which can cause painful ulcers on the tongue and cheeks. This may cause the rabbit to alter chewing patterns and this in turn can lead to far more serious issues.

Diet - In the wild, rabbits eat low quality forage such as grass nearly constantly throughout the day, and this will wear down the teeth as they grow. Many pet rabbits are fed too much concentrate food (pellets/muesli) and too little fibrous food such as hay. Concentrate foods are easy calories and make bunnies feel full very quickly meaning they often favour them to hay. The problem is that pellets/muesli require very little chewing so your rabbit will not chew enough fibrous food to wear down the teeth, which then overgrow either as spurs or back up into the jaw itself via the root.

There is also evidence to show that inappropriate calcium balances in the diet can also contribute to dental problems as the bone is softer and allows the teeth to move and become out of alignment with each other.



Surely tooth issues can't be that serious, right?

Wrong! Dental problems in rabbits can cause structural changes and health issues which are irreversible, affecting quality of life and ultimately may result in euthanasia. For example, overgrowth of cheek teeth can be directed inwards leading to obstruction of nasal passages, or blockage of the lacrimal duct, with a risk of infection and abscesses.

Signs of dental disease in rabbits

Rabbits are a prey species and as such will hide any signs of pain very effectively. At the point of noticing the following, the dental disease could already be advanced:

- Pickiness about food/change in preferences
- Dropping food
- Drooling or wet fur or matting on face/forelimbs
- Eating or drinking less
- Fewer or smaller poos
- Change in weight
- Bad breath
- Reduced activity
- Reduced grooming behaviour
- Poor coat condition and loss of fur
- Accumulation of caecotropes around the anus

Very severe signs:

- Discharge from the eye
- Pain (e.g. hunched posture, grinding teeth, lethargy)
- Refusal to drink/eat
- Weight loss
- Swelling on the face

Prevention

Hay should be the main food source with pellets and fresh vegetables as a garnish on the side to provide minerals and vitamins. We recommend a dental check up with the vet every 6-12 months to monitor for problems before they become too severe.



Treatment

Problems with the incisors can sometimes be corrected consciously using a burr, but problems with the cheek teeth generally require a general anaesthetic during which the teeth are returned to their correct shape. If the underlying cause cannot be corrected, rabbits may need repeat dental procedures during their life. In certain circumstances, it may be necessary to extract teeth under general anaesthetic, and if any abscesses have developed, these may need to be surgically removed. During a dental, the lacrimal ducts may need to be flushed if blocked, however these may be structurally damaged from root impaction. Overall, prevention is better than cure!

If you are concerned about dental disease in your rabbit, contact the practice on 01626 835002.

A seedy situation

In mid-summer we all love to let our dogs have a good run in the fields, but there can be a hidden danger – grass seeds are the perfect height to get stuck in dog ears/feet!

Ears

Grass seeds and crop grain seeds can be INCREDIBLY painful when trapped in the ear canal as they are so scratchy. If your dog starts shaking its head or rubbing at its ears suddenly after a walk, make sure you visit your vet as it may be a grass seed. More often than not the ear is so painful that a sedation or general anaesthetic is required for removal, and your pet will need painkillers while the ear canal heals.

Feet

Seeds that get caught between the toes or pads can pierce the skin and migrate under the skin into the foot or even up within the leg due to the barbs of the awn allowing one-way travel. This can be very painful and is often associated with infection. More worryingly, the wayward awns can be challenging and costly to resolve, as they do not show up well on X-ray. This means it can be hard to track where the seed has travelled, to allow surgical removal. Some dogs need referral for a CT scan to find the seed!

Overall, still enjoy walking your dogs this summer, but avoid fields of grass in seed to prevent these potential nasty complications.

Make an appointment to see your vet if you are worried your dog has a grass seed causing problems.

Does your pet suffer from skin complaints?

Throughout June, for all pets suffering from skin complaints we are offering a...

£20 Skin Clinic

Attending a skin clinic will also entitle you to:

10% off Shampoo

10% off Vetrus Range

10% off Nutramega

£5 off first bag of skin diet

If you would like to book your pet in for a skin clinic, please call 01626 835002.



Pet superstar

Woody might just be our unluckiest client. Earlier this year, he managed to get hold of an uncommon but incredibly toxic chemical known as potash, which can cause ulceration and liquefying necrosis of body tissues. Woody underwent intensive decontamination here and then headed up to Langford referral hospital. It was touch and go, but he did really well and came home with a long period of close monitoring, medication and a special diet.

This would have been enough drama for most dogs for the year, but just as he got the all clear from the potash debacle, Woody got into an altercation with an adder...and the adder won! He was rushed to us after being bitten on the toe with a rapidly swelling and horribly bruised leg, right up to the shoulder. We were all very concerned about Woody as he was suffering from a life threatening condition known as 'shock' due to the bite. He needed intensive care as well as administration of anti-venom, but he pulled through!

One week on, he had recovered from the adder bite and was getting back to his usual self. Woody's full name is Woodruff, and his owners have said he would be better named Wood-ruff-luck!

