



# Bill's Story

## Why is he spraying?



We have always had a soft spot for brown cats. Our first exposure to their lovable personalities came in the form of Sam, a neighbour's gorgeous Burmese boy who quickly worked his magic on us. Years later we adopted a brown boy called Truffles. Fast forward another seven years and Roxy, our first Tonk, found her way into our lives and spent five and a half happy years with us.

After losing Roxy in November 2021 we offered a new home to Lily when TCC contacted us. She was a three year old lilac Tonk, whose story we told previously in Tonkinews. Lily is very confident, energetic and demanding. It took her a while to learn how to share her new surroundings with our elderly chocolate Burmese girl Cleo.

However, by the autumn of last year things had settled sufficiently for us to start looking out for another furry housemate. That's how we came across Bill, a handsome eight year old brown Tonk who had recently lost his housemate and apparently was not coping well with a young baby at home.

We contacted Bill's owner and explained our situation. After a couple of Facetime calls we agreed to go up to Reading to meet Bill. The meeting went well and Bill joined us on the drive back to our home in Devon.  
Note: His rescue was not through TCC.

We set him up in a quiet corner of the house away from Lily and Cleo.

### Giving him time to settle

Unfortunately there were a few incidents of spraying in that first week but we put that down to him adjusting to his new surroundings and having been very unhappy in the run up to his move. We took turns to sit in with him every day for a week or so until we sensed it would be safe to meet the other two.

### Seemed happy

Bill soon started to enjoy the freedom of being able to go out in our large cat pen and then come in and settle by the wood burner. He amused himself by diving in the play tunnel and even had a few tentative goes on Lily's Cazami exercise wheel.



### Escalated to Spray War

Over the next few weeks things started to go a bit wrong for reasons that we struggled to understand at the time. Bill continued to spray intermittently. This upset both Lily and Cleo. Lily responded by starting to spray too. Cleo just hissed at them both and went off in a sulk. The spray wars escalated until it reached six or seven times a day. Not good.

### Contacted TCC for advice

Frustrated, we contacted Ulla at the TCC for help and advice. She suggested we first investigate any potential health issues. Lily and Bill were tested for urinary issues. Both came back negative.



### Broken tooth

However, we did notice that Bill had a broken tooth, so we booked him in for a full dental. He needed three operations to fix his various issues and, **as his mouth healed, his spraying reduced.**

A plug in Pet Remedy diffuser also helped to ease the tension between the cats.

### We found out his past was quite sad

Ulla asked about his past & in an attempt to understand Bill's behaviour, we obtained his full medical history from his previous vet. It turned out he had got into a lot of scrapes over the years with other cats and had been spraying since about 2016. The poor chap had clearly been bullied, so no wonder he was nervous with two new housemates. We live in the country and there are a couple of farm cats that sometimes wander across our land. They can't access our cat pen but their presence adds to the stress of both Bill and Lily.

### Medication to help his anxiety

Further helpful discussions with Ulla followed. When Bill had fully recovered from his dental issues and the spraying was still continuing albeit less, it was suggested that we go down the medication route to try to calm Bill's long standing anxiety and to discuss this with our vet. We talked about the options with our vet and started Bill on a course of Clomicalm – one tablet a day disguised in a bit of 'Easy Pill Giver Cat'. For the first few days he was very quiet and withdrawn. His change in personality took Lily by surprise. Even now she still tries to antagonise him but he rarely responds. He was less playful than before but we also lost most of the erratic spraying. Lily's spraying also reduced.

### Spraying reduced significantly

He has now been on the Clomicalm for 7 months. Slowly his lovable temperament is returning. He enjoys sitting on a lap and Lily can sometimes be tempted to sit near him on the sofa. According to the 'spray score chart' on our calendar, between them they average one or two sprays a week. Still not ideal but much better than before.

We hope that in time we can slowly reduce his dosage of Clomicalm but it is going to take a while to eliminate such ingrained behaviour. This has been by far the most challenging feline integration that we have ever managed but we feel we are beginning to turn a corner, thanks to help from Ulla and the TCC.



### Latest Update November:

Things have been much better between Lily, Bill and Cleo over the past month. We have started to light the woodburner in the evenings and that did the trick in tempting Bill and Cleo to cuddle up together in front of the fire. They mostly face away from each other but it's still good to see.

Written by Jo Counsell & Julian Grant

## When good cats do bad things

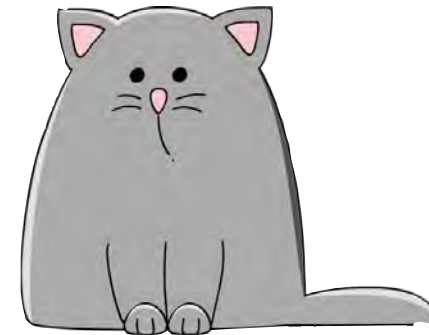
### Tips on Feline House Soiling

*Despite the cat's reputation for fastidious cleanliness, house soiling is the number one behaviour problem of our feline friends. Many cats are turned outside, given away, or even put to sleep for this behaviour problem, and it behoves the veterinary profession to address it. Urinating in odd places can mean a behaviour problem, a territorial marking problem, or some sort of social or environmental problem and sometimes the differences are not clear cut. Several factors may be in play and some conditions involve medical symptoms resulting from psychological stress.*

### SHOULD THE APPROACH BE MEDICAL?

There are several medical conditions that can lead a cat to inappropriate urination and these should be ruled out so as not to get on the wrong track. The cat will need to be examined and some testing. Conditions to rule out in part depend on the age of the cat, as young adult cats tend to get different diseases than do senior cats but, briefly, here are some conditions that should be checked out:

- Bladder infection (very common in senior cats, very unusual in young adult cats but still needs to be ruled out).
- Bladder stone (more common in female cats, than in male cats but can happen to any cat).
- Conditions that lead to excessive water consumption (there are probably a dozen such conditions and they are all more common in older cats versus younger cats but most are ruled out with a basic blood test).
- Arthritis (usually an older cat's problem. Often these cats will urinate next to the box or near it because they cannot squat properly or cannot step into a high-walled box).
- Bladder tumour (not common but still a con-



sideration in older cats especially if there is straining to urinate and/or bloody urine).

- Constipation frequently leads to the cat passing stool in any number of places and is generally characterised by straining to defecate and small very hard stools.

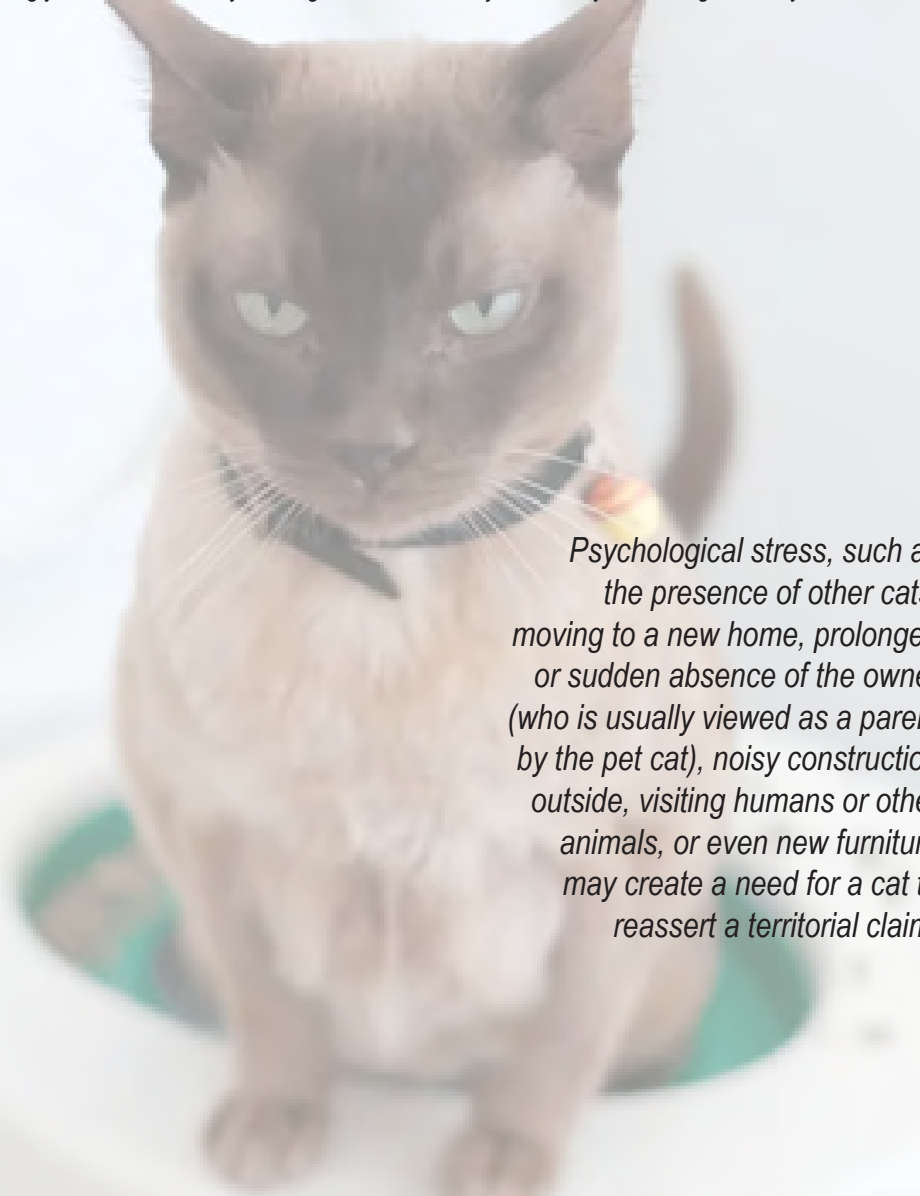
Of special note is the condition currently referred to as "**Feline Idiopathic Cystitis.**" This condition amounts to a physical manifestation of anxiety where the cat not only may urinate inappropriately but also strains painfully in the litter box, and produces bloody urine. A male cat can actually obstruct his urinary tract, creating a medical emergency. This is a common condition in young adult cats but is uncommon in older cats. As mentioned, your vet should evaluate your cat medically **before you conclude that the problem is behavioural** and you embark on a long-term behavioural approach.



# URINE MARKING / TERRITORIAL ANXIETY

When good cats do bad things

Cats use urination and defecation as a means of communication with other cats. By leaving their mark, they are telling other cats "I was here on this date at this time." Other cats may then know this land has been claimed (or has not been recently claimed) and may act accordingly. Cats also mark by rubbing their faces on objects and by scratching vertically on surfaces.



*Psychological stress, such as the presence of other cats, moving to a new home, prolonged or sudden absence of the owner (who is usually viewed as a parent by the pet cat), noisy construction outside, visiting humans or other animals, or even new furniture may create a need for a cat to reassert a territorial claim.*

Signs that this kind of stress is causing the problem might include some or all of the following:

- Spraying on an upright surface.
- Urinating in the litter box sometimes and sometimes urinating elsewhere (as opposed to never using the box at all).
- Defecating in the cat box but urinating outside the box.
- The cat (either male or female) is not neutered.
- There has been a change at home leading the cat to feel he/she must reassert his/her territorial boundaries. (Examples: a new pet has been added, a new roommate has been added, a recent move to a new home has occurred, remodelling has been done, the owner recently returned from a vacation, other neighbourhood cats are visible or smellable in the yard.)
- The area marked is near a door or window.
- The problem did not start until new furniture was added or the furniture was rearranged.
- The cat appears to be responding to a punishment for another behaviour.
- The area marked involves the owner's bed or laundry.
- The area marked is the same each time.



If any of these scenarios seem to fit, anti-anxiety medications may be tremendously helpful if the source of stress cannot be identified or cannot be altered. 2 medications commonly used as anti-anxiety treatments for inappropriate urination:

### CLOMIPRAMINE®

This medication has been helpful in the treatment of obsessive-compulsive disease and depression in humans and has been approved for canine separation anxiety. It has come to be the first choice of many behaviourists for urine marking cats. **It has shown effectiveness at near 90% and in most cats requires only once a day dosing.**

### FLUOXETINE

This medication is more commonly known as Prozac®. It has been used for feline urine marking and has been found of comparable efficacy to clomipramine. **At least 8 weeks of treatment was required to achieve results in over 90% of cats and as long as they took the medication, they did not mark.** If the medication is discontinued, marking may resume but is just as likely to respond a second time if the initial treatment was successful.

# KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON

When good cats do bad things

## OTHER PRODUCTS FOR ANXIETY

Several other products that help with anxiety are noteworthy, especially in situations where a cat is not amenable to taking medication or there is a medical condition that precludes medication.

## DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS

Zylkene contains a natural milk protein - alpha-casozepine with clinically proven calming effects to help support your cat. Sprinkle it over your cat's food.

Royal Canin has also formulated it into a calming diet - Royal Canin Vet Diet Calm Cat.

It is not particularly sedating but has anti-anxiety properties helpful in creating a more "zen" brain-chemistry.

L-theanine is derived from green tea leaves and is available in tablet form for cats also for anxiety management.

Supplements such as these are compatible with the other therapies listed so they may be used in combination with pheromones or

## PHEROMONE SPRAYS AND DIFFUSER

Feliway® spray is a spray for the area being marked rather than a medication administered to the cat. The spray consists of feline pheromones of the type that cats deposit when performing facial marking (i.e., rubbing their face/cheeks on things to scent mark). These pheromones provide a message in the cat's own language proclaiming that the territory is secure and there is nothing to worry about. This confers a general calming effect and reduces the cat's interest in marking. Feliway is available as a spray to apply to marking surfaces or as a plug-in diffuser that spreads pheromones through the room. Diffusers last approximately one month.



# LITTER BOX AVERSION

Another reason why cats urinate or defecate outside the box is simply that the box is not acceptable to them. The box may be dirty, may not be adequately private, may smell funny or be uncomfortable.

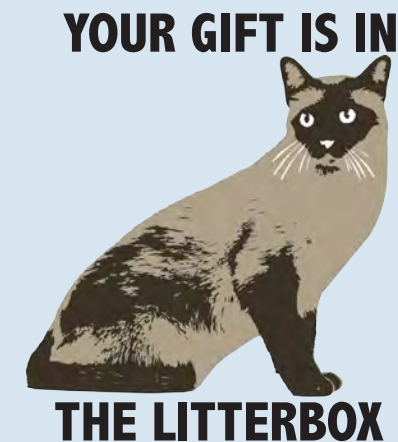
*The following are clues that an inappropriate urination problem reflects litter box aversion:*

- Both urination and defecation occur outside the litter box.
- Two or more cats share a litter box (the current litter box recommendation is one box per cat plus one extra).
- A new brand of litter is suddenly being used.
- The box is covered. (A covered bathroom area is highly unnatural for cats as they prefer better lighting for elimination and odours are concentrated in an enclosed area such as a covered box.)
- The box is not changed frequently.
- The cat has had a negative experience in the box (the cat was captured from the box to receive medication or be disciplined).
  - The litter box is in a heavy household traffic area or where there are noisy appliances.
- A puppy or dog (or even a small child) is bothering the cat in the box.
- The litter box is located near a noisy appliance (such as a clothes dryer).
- Another cat in the household is a bully and/or controls access to resources such as food, rest areas or the litter box in a multi-cat household.

Cats with litter box aversion frequently require re-training to the box. As a first step, the litter box situation must be made optimal as best as possible.

Odor eliminators like Nature's Miracle Spray should be used in marked areas to discourage the cat's tendency to return to these areas.

If you feel that your cat is unhappy or suffers from stress or anxiety, we suggest a vet consultation to determine the reason behind the stress, and to work out a plan to help your feline friend to be calm and happy again.



Compiled by Ulla Korterman

Source: <https://www.marvistavet.com/house-soiling-feline.pml>