

Let's Talk Water!

Written by Allegra Loch

Editor:

Allegra is a member of The Tonkinese Cat Club, an experienced breeder, owner of 7 Tonks and a qualified Feline Psychologist & Behaviourist.

Her Tonks have had ongoing issues with UTI over the years and Allegra has been looking into why this keeps happening and finally found an answer.

We asked her to share her findings as they are extremely interesting and quite a revelation.

Certainly food for thought if you have Tonks that suffer from **urinary issues**.

Maybe its time to check your water!



Photo Credit: U Korterman

The purest, best thing there is! For us and for our animals. Or so we think. But is it really? Maybe we need to dig a little deeper into what is consumed blindly without thought. Do we assume too much?

I have been battling urine issues in our tonks for many years in our home with no real answers as to why.

But some recent articles in newspaper tabloids got me and a friend thinking as we've both battled the same ongoing issues with our Tonks.

At first you might brush such articles away, newspapers are notorious for scaremongering with their headlines. And ones saying "our water is poisoning our pets" are surely scaremongering?! But what if they're not?

Alongside our own issues, I've helped countless other cats through behaviour work and I'm here to share a bit of a voyage of discovery in terms of our water.

In our case boys without any shadow of a doubt have been the worst affected with urine issues over the years but recently & over time even many of our girls have had instances of uti (urinary tract infection), cystitis etc.



Pearl

To top it off our newest addition who is still only a kitten - Pearl, recently had a bout.

She's absolutely fine following a course of antibiotics & anti inflammatories but my husband and I and the vets were saying how crazy this is!

"There must be something in the water haha" Jokingly!

To add to this, our vet sees so so so many cats with the same issue and mainly indoor cats.

“I naively assumed that our tap water here would be pH neutral & safe. But I was horrified to find that not only am I in a very hard water area but that our pH is +9!!!”

Time to revisit those articles and do some digging.

A complete journey of discovery has followed the questioning and some astonishing answers have hopefully been found!

It turns out that the UK may be a little bit behind the times regarding pets and water.

Already a major study has been done in the US by one of the largest insurance companies there - Trueanion - *that proves a direct link between water hardness & pH with HUGELY increased urinary issues.* So the newspapers actually weren't scaremongering as such but seriously accurate.

As many may know (or may not know) the ideal water pH for a cat is 6.2-6.5.

This is the pH that their urine should also ideally be to avoid risk of sediment, crystals, stones, uti and inflammation.

I naively assumed that our tap water here would be pH neutral & safe. But I was horrified - following all the literature, I bought test strips to test our own water, to find that not only am I in a very hard water area but that our pH is +9!!!!

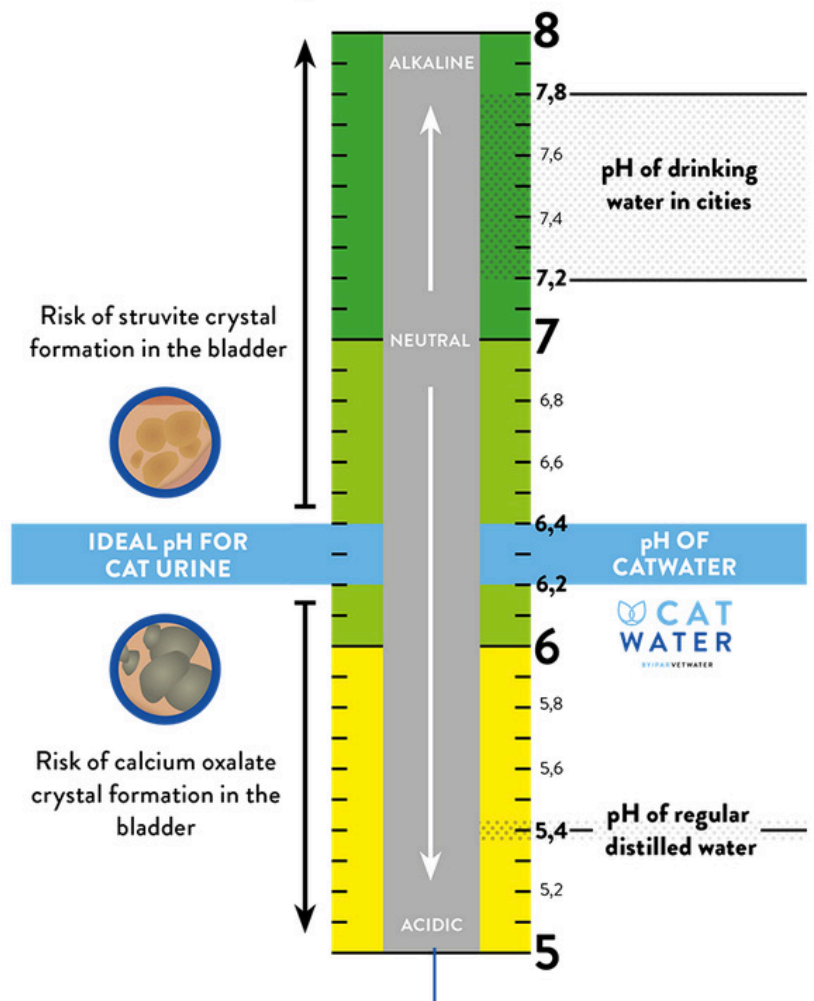
It was the top of the chart and incredibly bad for our cats to be ingesting.

We spend our lives here supplementing the cats to bring the pH down and all along every day they were topping up with pH +9 water.

Alongside the pH as I mentioned already, is the issue of **hardness**. Even very hard water when compared with hard *gives an enormous increase in likelihood of urine issues* as per the studies by Trupanion.

We know this because cats don't process minerals in the same way that we do. The harder the water, the more full it is of calcium and magnesium which can create issues in cats such as uti, cystitis, sediment & crystals.

Effects of pH in Urine and Water

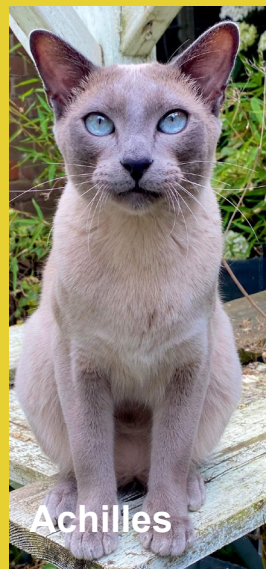


Our poor Achilles is currently full of sediment & debris (following a recent bladder scan) this absolutely totally (hopefully) explains why!

He is now of course extremely uncomfortable and on a cocktail of medicine to help combat this and flush them through. But all these things lead to unwanted behaviour in many cats such as spraying, increased irritability due to pain, and stress levels being heightened, peeing outside the tray and of course in more extreme cases it can lead to blockage of the urethra and in the worst cases loss of life. Flushing sediment, crystals or debris through and reducing inflammation take time to resolve.

Boys will always suffer more because they have a much narrower urethra so this affects male cats far more, having said that the only cat in our own home who has never to date had a single UTI or other issue is Maia.

I can categorically say most of our cats are VERY happy too. The boys have their ongoing frictions but not the girls. And certainly not Pearl who as a kitten couldn't be more carefree & relaxed! So I know in those cases it's not stress related. By continually giving our cats tap water, we have been adding to an already existing problem especially for our poor boys.



The light at the end of our tunnel is that following masses of further research I have found a water that is safe but also the ideal pH for the cats, softer water and with a pH of 6.5 (I did check it on our water test strips).

The cats at first were typical fuss pots and sniffed it and weren't so sure but gradually are coming round to it! Being indoor only cats also (even though they have 2 catios) ours are not exposed to rainwater which would be far better for them, with a neutral pH due to the fact it doesn't run through limestone, chalk etc. This explains why indoor only cats in very hard water areas are FAR more likely to have issues.

Growing up our cats went outdoors and drank almost solely from puddles etc. Mine do not have this opportunity although I have now put several ceramic bowls to collect rainwater in their catios.

The long and short of all this, is to check what water your cats are having especially if you're experiencing issues.

It might make a massive impact!

Obviously it's not the only cause of urine issues and I certainly am not suggesting that but it certainly explains a lot and why the frequency of urine issues is so high!

It can also exacerbate any existing urine issues for example those caused by stress or medical conditions.

In the US you can actually buy 'Cat Water' designed specifically with all this in mind. There is no such thing here but the Tesco Ashbeck water that I have found is as close to good as we will get, it is very reasonable too! Or start collecting rainwater for your cats!!

UTIS IN CATS

SIGNS THAT YOUR CAT HAS IT

- Noticeable thickness along the wall of the bladder during a physical exam at the vet
- Changes in bathroom behavior, like urinating more or less often than usual
- An unappealing odor stemming from your cat's urine
- Strained urination and possibly bowel movements
- Scratching, licking, or biting in the genital region
- Accidents on rugs, carpets, floors, et cetera
- Bleeding when using the litter box
- Inability to use the bathroom
- Refusing to use the litter box
- Abnormal urination patterns
- Pain when urinating


YUCK! WHAT IS THAT SMELL!?





I've spoken to lots of friends now & we have compared water hardness and I have also discussed findings with many friends who have never had issues. All the latter it turns out have either medium or less hard water than ours. The 4 people I know who have multiple cats with constant on & off issues all have extremely hard water.


I also did a little survey in one of the feline urinary groups I'm on (see below). Lo & behold the results were very stark!

Further to my last post, please can you select your water type if your cat has ever suffered with urine issue (crystals/sediment/uti etc) You can find out online if you don't know by putting in your post code. There has been a lot in the media linking pet urine issues to water type so I'm really interested as is my vet. Thank you

Very hard water  > X

Hard water  > X

Medium water  > X

Added by [Surpreet Kaur](#)  > X

moderately soft

[See All \(1\)](#)

30 votes 35 comments

I really do hope this helps some people who have what feels like constant issues.

Sources:

1. Catster: U.S. Water Supplies Linked to Feline Urinary Problems By Jackie Brown, November 9, 2016
2. MailOnline: Expert issues urgent warning to dog and cat owners over 'harmful' tap water that could be 'slowly poisoning' your pets By Ellen Coughlan For Mailonline - 4 May 2023
3. Catwater.com

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