



Dr. Jessica Taylor is a small animal veterinarian at Guilford Jamestown Veterinary Hospital with a passion for client communication, as well as interests in preventative care, pain management, and cardiology. She is a graduate of North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine and has practiced in the Triad since 2006. She shares her home with her husband and two daughters, the laziest hound dog on earth, and a tyrant of a cat. In any spare time, she enjoys running, reading, and writing.

Dr. Taylor looks forward to meeting you and your pet!



"My cat peed on my bed...why does he hate me?"

Felines are known for being fickle. One day they love you, the next day they are stand-offish and seem spiteful! Cats love to knock your priceless treasures off of tall shelves, then deny it ever happened or blame the dog. Unfortunately, many pet cats get surrendered or euthanized for house-soiling that pet owners cannot tolerate or remedy. The good news is that there are many steps we can take to help prevent this from happening and ensure a long, healthy relationship for you and your cat.

First step- find the underlying cause!

Cats are not hateful, despite what many people think. If your kitty is having accidents, the first place to start is with an exam by your veterinarian. He or she will look for signs of bladder inflammation, crystals in the urine, pain, or other underlying diseases that can lead to changes in urination. Hormonal diseases such as diabetes and hyperthyroidism can cause urinary problems, as can bacterial infections and bladder stones. Appropriate treatment of these conditions can resolve the unwanted behavior and extend your pet's life, but diagnosis is key!

Some cats are diagnosed with Feline Idiopathic Cystitis (FIC), a diagnosis reached when other medical causes have been ruled out. Some severe cases can cause a blockage, resulting in an emergency (seek treatment if your pet is not producing urine in the litter box). FIC is more common in male cats, and obesity, decreased activity, multiple cats, and indoor housing increase the risk.

Cats also exhibit marking behavior, which usually shows up as urinating on a vertical surface, often in an attempt to establish territory or as a result of other cats encroaching on the pet's personal space. Diagrams of the house and watching for outside visitors and stray cats are important to distinguish marking behaviors from other house-soiling.

Finally, some cats have house-soiling accidents in response to the type of litter, litter box, litter box placement, or competition in the home. Discussing the number of litter boxes, type of litter, and interaction with other cats and pets is essential to dissect the triggers.

Second Step- treatment and sanity!

If your feline friend has an underlying medical condition, be sure to follow the doctor's instructions carefully, including medical progress exams. Stopping medication or food too soon can cause a relapse of symptoms and start the frustration all over again! There are many prescription foods that can aid in control of some of these conditions by decreasing urine crystal formation and reducing stress. Be sure to ask your vet about long term nutrition goals!

Other remedies include adding litter boxes, changing the type or size of the litter box, changing the litter to an unscented litter, or making litter boxes more easily accessible. Many older cats may have trouble getting in or out of the litter box, so even getting a box with a lower entry can make a huge difference.

Ultimately, many unwanted behaviors in cats can be remedied with some detective work and persistence. Be sure to bring any concerns to your veterinarian as soon as they occur for the best chance at reaching an answer quickly. We want you and your felines to live in harmony and mutual respect. However, we can't promise they won't break stuff – *cats will be cats!*

Five Pillars of a Healthy Feline Environment*

1. Provide a safe place: offer a secluded, individualized location such as a perch, quiet room, or enclosure where they can retreat during stressful events such as having visitors, construction in the home, or from other pets.
2. Make sure multi-cat households have adequate resources: avoid competition and friction between housemates by providing multiple stations for food, water, and litter box access. Be sure there are multiple hiding and resting places, too.
3. Provide time for play and predatory behavior: Boredom stresses cats. Provide opportunity for your feline to hunt using treat toys and puzzles, as well as plush toys they can attack and carry away. If you use a laser pointer, be sure it lands on an object they can attack to avoid frustration.
4. Positive and predictable human-cat interaction: regular, friendly interaction with people is good for your feline, but they may prefer shorter periods of petting than you would like. Follow their lead on the petting and don't pester them.
5. Don't overwhelm their sense of smell: cats use their nose to evaluate their surroundings, so avoid introducing heavily scented litter, detergents, and new foods that can trigger stress. Some pheromone products (such as Feli-way) can reduce stress and decrease house-soiling when used properly.

*For more details on cat care, visit www.catvets.com. The Feline Practitioners' website.

720 Guilford College Rd. (near I-40)
336.852.0200
guilfordjamestownvet.com



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