



FREE PREVIEW

The Stressed Cat

Five pages from our 14-day guide to peeing outside the box, scratching, lashing out and hiding, and the stress that's often part of them

Often, it's stress. First, rule out pain.

2 It isn't spite, it's often stress

4 One small, safe thing to try today

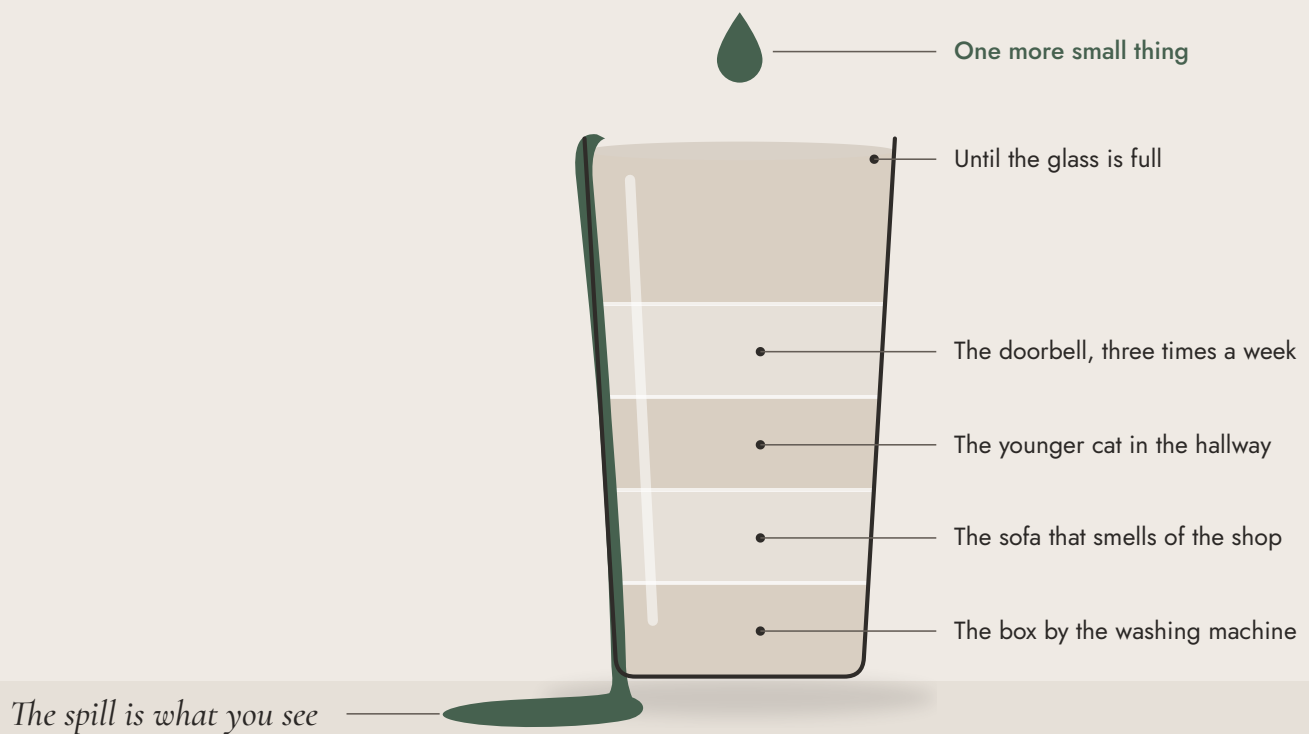
3 Before anything else

5 The full guide: coming soon

It isn't spite, it's often stress

Your cat isn't doing this to upset you. Cats don't plan revenge, and they don't hold grudges. Each of these problems is a sign that something your cat needs is missing, or that something feels like too much. Often, that something is stress. Not always: pain and illness can look exactly the same, which is why every cat starts with the vet.

Think of your cat's day as a glass of water. Every small thing that bothers them adds a little. The box sits next to the washing machine: a drop. The new sofa smells of the shop, not of home: a drop. The younger cat sleeps in the hallway, right where the older one needs to pass: a drop. The doorbell, three times a week: a drop. A cat from next door crosses the garden at dusk: a drop.



Your cat copes with each one, until the glass is full and one more small thing spills it over: a visitor, a hand on their back, a door slamming. The spill is what you see: the puddle, the fresh marks, the swipe, the days under the bed. That's why it can seem to come from nowhere, and why a fix sometimes helps for a week and then stops: you took one drop out, but the glass was still nearly full.

It's a picture of stress, not a scientific model. But it explains the plan: find the biggest drops, and take them out one at a time, while everyone stays safe.

Before anything else

Before you change anything at home, your cat needs a vet visit, or, for scratching, at least a careful look at the paws. Cats are very good at hiding discomfort, and pain or illness can look just like the four problems in this guide. Only a vet can rule these out.

Peeing outside the box: go to the vet today, or an emergency vet tonight, if your cat:

- strains in the box and passes little or no urine, especially a male cat;
- keeps going back to the box with nothing coming out;
- cries or seems in pain while trying;
- is also being sick, won't eat, or seems flat, restless or hides away.

A blocked bladder is an emergency and can become life-threatening quickly. It happens almost only in male cats. Straining from constipation can look similar, and it's hard to be sure which it is at home, so don't wait to see. Call your vet now, even at night.

Scratching: go to the vet today if a paw is swollen, hot or bleeding, or your cat won't put weight on it. A swollen, painful paw can be a bite that has become infected, and it needs a vet the same day.

Book a vet visit before you change anything if...

- it's new or sudden, or the behaviour changed suddenly: much more, or much less;
- your cat is drinking more, eating or grooming less, hiding more, or just seems "not themselves";
- they're older, stiff when they jump or step into the box, or flinch when touched somewhere they used to enjoy.

Aggression: go to the vet today if:

- the aggression started suddenly, in a cat who used to be gentle;
- your cat is limping, walking stiffly, or has stopped jumping;
- they're hiding much more than usual;
- they've stopped eating, or are eating much less;
- they cry, hiss or flinch when touched in one place, or when picked up;
- there's a wound, a swelling or a smell after a fight;
- they seem unwell in any other way.

A bite or a deep scratch that broke the skin goes to a doctor today, especially on the hand: cat bites can become infected quickly.

Fear and hiding: go to the vet today if your cat:

- hides and won't eat for a day;
- is breathing fast, or breathing with their mouth open;
- can't pee, or keeps going to the box and passes little or nothing;
- is vomiting again and again;
- seems weak, wobbly or in pain.

Out of hours, call your vet's emergency number. Don't wait to see if it passes.

One small, safe thing to try today

Until the visit, the changes at home wait. Watching doesn't, so you can start today. No changes yet, apart from the safety rules if you need them. Watch without being watched, from a distance: no hovering by the hiding place, no touching, no stepping in, and no setting things up to see what happens.

Each time something happens, write one line: where, when, what happened just before (the most important part), what happened, and how it ended.

PEEING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Peeing or spraying?

Peeing: your cat squats and leaves a puddle on a flat surface, a rug, the bed, the floor beside the box.

Spraying: your cat backs up to something upright, tail raised and often quivering, and leaves a little urine at about nose height. The two usually have different causes.

If you can, watch your cat use the box from a distance. Perching on the edge, sniffing and leaving, or running out the moment they've finished can each mean something about the box feels wrong.

Don't move anything yet. Write it down.

SCRATCHING

Map every scratched spot

Go room by room at cat height: pulled threads on sofas, long lines on door frames and wallpaper, flattened loops on carpets and stairs, claw husks on the floor. For each spot, note the height of the highest marks (how far your cat stretches), the surface, the direction (up and down, or along), and what's near: a door, a window, a bed. Photograph it from a place you'll remember.

Don't react when your cat scratches the sofa: no "no!", no clapping, no rushing over. Even a telling-off is attention.

AGGRESSION

Stay out of reach

The one rule behind every step: you stay out of reach. Doors, barriers, distance, treats tossed or offered on a long spoon, and wand toys. Never hands. Until the visit, animals who fight are kept apart, and a cat who bites when touched isn't touched.

Watch for the uneasy signs: ears turning sideways, the tail tip flicking or swishing, skin rippling along the back. Just before a swipe or a bite, many cats **freeze:** the body stiffens and the eyes fix. Stop: hands away, step back, and leave a way out.

Never punish: no shouting, no water spray, no tap on the nose.

FEAR AND HIDING

Note one brave moment

Never take a hiding place away. Never pull your cat out.

Note roughly how long your cat hid each day, and one brave moment: soft eyes, slow blinks; the tail up as they walk; watching you from a doorway instead of from under the bed; coming out a little earlier. These are your cat's brave moments, and every one counts.

Don't reach in to check, or shine a torch at your cat.

Whatever the problem, if you catch your cat in the act, stay quiet. Telling a cat off, a water spray, even a sharp voice: your cat links it with you, not with the puddle or the sofa.

The full guide: coming soon

The full guide covers four problems where stress often plays a part: peeing outside the box, scratching the furniture, lashing out at other animals or people, and hiding.

14 days, one step a day

- **Day 0 · Rule out.** A vet visit before you change anything, because some causes are medical.
- **Days 1–3 · Read.** Three days of watching and noting, ending with your track.
- **Days 4–10 · Reset.** One change a day, in a set order, in the track for your problem.
- **Days 11–14 · Review.** What stays, what to adjust, and a plan for the weeks after.

After Day 14 comes **Keep**: a weekly check for six weeks, what to do after a setback, and the slow reintroduction for cats who had to be kept apart.

Four tracks

One track per problem for Days 4 to 10, with one change a day. You only need to read your own.

- Peeing outside the box
- Scratching furniture
- Aggression towards other animals or people
- Fear and hiding

Twelve printable sheets

In black and white, to keep by the kettle or on the fridge, with a pen. Eight for every cat: the vet visit sheet, the home map, the 3-day observation diary, the signs chart, your drops in order, the change log, the 14-day progress sheet and the weekly check. And one for each track: the box audit and cleaning card, the post checklist and claw-trimming steps, the safety card and safe-distance ladder, the hiding map and visitor card.

Fourteen days is the length of the guide, not a deadline for your cat. Some cats settle sooner, some take longer, and some homes need a second round.

The full guide is coming soon: a PDF to keep, and one short email a day with that day's step.
Launch price: €37.

SEE THE GUIDE

felinacatcare.com/guide

What's inside, the four tracks and the method.

TAKE THE 2-MINUTE CHECK

felinacatcare.com/quiz

Free: what may be filling your cat's glass, and the signs that mean a vet visit first.



Felina shares general information about cat behaviour. It isn't veterinary advice. If you're worried about your cat, talk to your vet.