

# **When a Blockage in Your Cat Can Become Deadly**

**"Blocked cat" is a term used when a cat's urethra becomes obstructed or "blocked," and he or she cannot urinate. This condition also is known as Feline Urinary Syndrome (FUS) and feline Urethral Obstruction (FUO). It is most common in male cats, but occasionally occurs in female cats, as well. It is a painful condition that is a true emergency as the cat can become toxic and die within a couple of days.**

## **Telltale Signs & Symptoms**

**The symptoms are initially similar to a bladder infection, because the cat will spend a lot of time in the litter box trying to urinate, but will only produce a few drops of urine or nothing at all. As the bladder grows larger and the toxins build up in the body, the cat will become more depressed and possibly cry or moan a lot. As the level of toxins elevates, vomiting can occur, and the cat can become comatose. Often the cat's urethra is blocked with a sandy, gritty material made up of mineral crystals, such as magnesium, calcium, phosphorus oxalate and others. Sometimes a small amount of the crystals cause enough inflammation for the tissue to swell closed all by itself.**

## **Getting to the Root of the Problem**

**Research has shown that both bacteria and diet play a role in the cause of FUS. My experience in more than 25 years of practicing veterinary medicine is that there is a percentage of cats that are prone to FUS. Diet plays a huge role in preventing the disease in all cats and**

**especially in those cats that seem predisposed to developing FUS. Throughout my career, each time a cat with symptoms of FUS has been brought into my practice for an examination and treatment, I have asked the owner what diet the cat has been eating. There are several diets on the lower end of the quality scale that are named a large percentage of the time. However, there are also a few cats that are eating well-regarded premium diets that present occasionally, as well. I am confident that these are cats that are especially prone to developing FUS.**

## **The Key to Prevention**

**We can prevent FUS by feeding special diets formulated specifically to minimize the formation of mineral crystals. I never have had a recurrence of FUS in a cat whose owner was strict about feeding only the correct diet after the original diagnosis. On the other hand, I have seen the cats who are predisposed to FUS have recurrences after only a few days of eating the wrong food. Cat food manufacturers advertise special urinary diets that are commercially available in grocery stores and pet stores, but these foods do not prevent the recurrence in cats who are predisposed to FUS. If your cat has experienced FUS, be sure to follow your veterinarian's dietary recommendation for the rest of the cat's life.**

## **Why Veterinary Care is Imperative**

**A cat with FUS generally has to be placed under anesthesia so that the veterinarian can perform a procedure that will "unblock" the cat. Following the procedure, the cat will need to spend several days in a hospital with catheters attached. In some cases, cats with FUS will require surgery. All that expense and discomfort**

**usually can be avoided by feeding your feline a high-quality diet. I recommend that you consult with your veterinarian before choosing a diet for your cat. If a commercial or advertisements for a particular diet catch your eye, talk to your veterinarian before purchasing anything new or before changing your cat's diet.**