

## Why Is My Indoor Cat Spraying?

**CatChannel behavior expert Marilyn Krieger, CCBC, discusses possible triggers for spraying, including outside cats.**

*By Marilyn Krieger*

Posted: Sept. 18, 2009 3:00 a.m. EDT

**Q:** Our cat is an indoor only, spayed 6-year-old female DSH who recently started spraying. Our vet looked at her and noted that she may have a bladder problem and was given medicine. She is still spraying. The vet also said that it may be a behavior problem.

She sprays the same area near the baseboards in our living room. Even though we clean the area, she repeatedly sprays the same area every few days.

The cat didn't have problems when we had our first child, Jack, two years ago. Now that he is mobile, we're not sure that she's still feeling OK about Jack, though Jack doesn't bother her or pet her. Jack has been the major change in our home.

We show her attention and she loves my wife and my wife adores her. We're frustrated but I'm not at the point where I want to send her out of the home. How do we positively change this bad behavior?

**A:** It is important to first determine if the spraying is caused by an unresolved medical problem. I recommend that you have your cat rechecked by your veterinarian. Since I am not a veterinarian, I can only address the possible behavioral causes and solutions for the behavior.

Many people think that only whole males spray. Depending on the circumstances, any cat can spray; intact, fixed, male or female. When cats spray, they are not being bad kitties. The spraying is always caused by either an event or environmental factors or a medical problem. Spraying behaviors can be stopped, but first it's important to identify the triggers and modify or eliminate them.

From the information in your post, it sounds like there are a few circumstances that could be triggering your cat to spray. It is possible that you have outside visiting cats that are triggering the behavior. Are the targeted baseboards located in areas where there are windows and/or doors? Typically, spraying cats who are responding to outsiders will spray under or around windows and doors. Ideally, the outside cats need to be managed and kept out of the yard. More realistically, cover the windows so that your cat can't see out. Deterrents, such as lemon or Bitter Apple can also be applied to the targeted areas. I also recommend, if possible, keeping your cat out of the living room.

Another trigger to consider is inadequate cleanup. Cats will continue to target the same areas unless an excellent enzyme cleaner is used, and some enzyme cleaners are not as effective as others. Also, areas that have been targeted repeatedly can be very difficult, if not impossible to clean. Multiple applications of an effective enzyme cleaner that are allowed to soak in may help; otherwise you might have to replace the baseboards that are being targeted.

The high activity levels of your son might also be a trigger for spraying. Provide your cat with lots of safe areas that are off-limits to Jack. Tall cat trees with enclosed boxes at the top and high shelves where your cat can safely retreat will help increase your cat's sense of security. Additionally, baby gates will also allow your cat to have her own sanctuaries that are quiet and safe.