



Sterile Interstitial Cystitis: Why stress makes your cat pee red

By Dr Erika Raines

No one lives a stress free life, not even the most sheltered and pampered house cat. While some stress is good, large amounts of stress lead to health problems in any species. Why is it, then, that our feline friends so commonly develop litter box issues when stress arises in their households?

While there are many manifestations of these problems, in this article we will focus on the kitties who "pee red" when they encounter more stress than they can handle. Sometimes called "suitcase kitties", these are the cats who develop bloody urine in response to the stress of their people leaving for holidays, adopting a new cat, having company over, or perhaps another feline stressor that we are unable to discover. For these unfortunate souls stress doesn't just mean a little blood in their urine; it also means pain. Most often these cats will develop intense bladder and urethral irritation (the source of the bleeding) and will often yowl in the litter box while attempting to urinate. They usually will attempt to urinate frequently while only producing a small amount of bloody urine each time. Often they will pee in inappropriate places such as closets, carpets, or in the bath tub.

The first step in helping out a cat with cystitis, an inflamed bladder, is to take a urine sample. Stress is not the only thing that can cause a cystitis. Your uncomfortable cat could also have urinary crystals or a bladder infection. A urine sample helps to rule out these other conditions and confirm that while there is blood present, there are no bacteria or crystals occurring that might have caused the bleeding. This result leaves us with the allopathic, or conventional medical diagnosis of sterile interstitial cystitis (SIC).

Even though a similar condition can occur in human women, allopathic medicine still is not able to adequately explain or even treat SIC with much efficacy. Needless to say, this void in our medical knowledge is frustrating for the veterinarian and concerned cat person alike, to say nothing of how poor Fluffy feels about it. This begs the question: How can we, as practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) explain SIC, and is there an effective way to treat this condition?

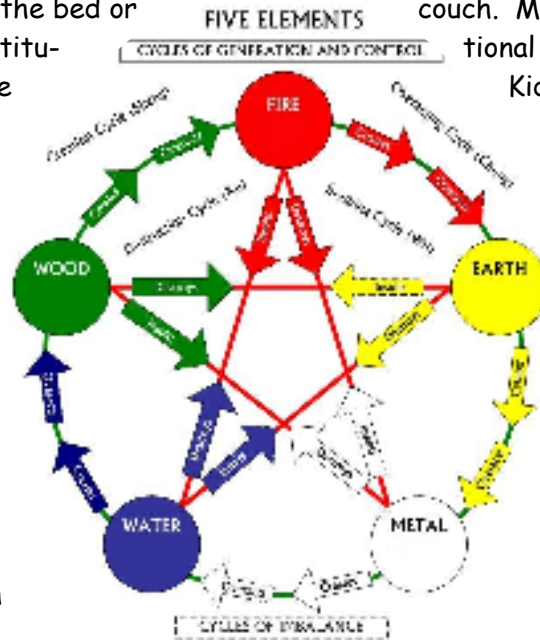
While TCM is a highly individualized system of medicine where a single allopathic diagnosis can have a multitude of Chinese pattern diagnoses that will be found in different patients, there are some generalities that can be made. The most common TCM diagnosis that corresponds to a allopathic diagnosis of SIC is



Liver Qi stagnation with Fire invading the Bladder. That sounds like quite a mouthful, but read on and we will work through it.

This diagnosis is based on the Five Phase philosophy of TCM. Each of us has a constitutional phase corresponding to our personality and physical body's strengths and weaknesses. Many cats, particularly those affected by this condition are Water constitution. Water beings are cautious, introverted, and can be timid. They can be fearful, but they respond appropriately to fear by fleeing the intimidating situation and hiding. For example, when the cat carrier comes out, they make a dive for the deepest, dustiest corner under the bed or couch. Most often we are weakest in the constitutional phase. For a constitutionally Water person, these organs are the Kidneys and Urinary Bladder. We will return to this point in a moment.

Using Five Phase theory, most medical conditions can be explained between the phases. To explain SIC we will be looking at the Cheng or overacting cycle as well as the Wu or insulting cycle. For most cats who suffer from SIC, the initial event leading to a bout of cystitis is a stressful situation of one sort or another. The visceral in TCM philosophy is the Liver, Wood phase shown in the diagram. When we experience more stress than our Liver can deal with at one time, it becomes less effective at performing its job of moving Qi through the body in a smooth, even, and continuous manner.



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Qi is a dynamic substance that is meant to constantly be in motion. You can think of this as a car that moves at a constant speed. When Qi is not kept in regular motion it is like a car which has had the brakes applied, but never slows down. As you can imagine this situation leads to friction and heat in the brakes. Similar to this when Qi stagnates it produces Heat. Stagnation is also a condition of excess. Since no solid, or Yin organ likes to hold on to excess, the Liver, or Wood, will hand this off to someone else.

Sometimes Yin organs will hand off their excess to the Yang, or hollow organ associated with them. We will see that happening later, but most frequently in these cases the Wood phase overacts on the Fire phase because of this stagnation. Again, the Fire phase does not want to hold on to the excess and will hand it off to someone else. Instead of continuing in the overacting cycle as before, the Fire phase will insult the Water phase. The reason that it frequently takes this path is due to the constitutional weakness of what are usually Water cats. If a Fire is increased and there is not enough Water to extinguish it, all of the Water will evaporate. The Heat or Fire is then passed on to the Kidneys.

Since from a TCM perspective the Kidneys are often weak organs in these cats, they will not be able to further pass the Heat on to a different organ pair. Kidneys are a solid, Yin organ however, and will pass the Heat on to their Yang husband organ, which is the Urinary Bladder. The Bladder disposes of the Heat as best it can, which results in a burning sensation when urinating and blood in the urine for no clear reason.

Now that we have a clear TCM diagnosis, we can develop a rational treatment method. In this case the treatment rationale is to clear Heat from the Bladder and to move Liver Qi. This can be accomplished using a combination of herbs and acupuncture to treat your kitty. If your cat has a history of these problems, we can often recommend preventive herbal treatment when you anticipate your friend is going to face unusually stressful conditions in the near future. With the help of TCM, relief is possible for this painful condition.





Changing of the Guards...

By Dr. Marlene Smith-Schalkwijk



Yes it is true; you have all heard the rumours that I have been looking at handing over the reins to a younger generation of veterinarians. And yes we have found a new and extremely dedicated veterinarian who is willing to follow in my footsteps.

Dr. Matheson and Dr Raines together will continue to provide acupuncture, herbal medicine, chiropractics, homeopathy and homotoxicology integrated with western medicine to those who would like to follow these modalities for their pets. Dr. Raines received her Chinese veterinary medicine training at the Chi Institute in Florida and will have finished her chiropractic training by the time you get this newsletter. She will be taking the reins of the equine clients once again; I used to take care of the horse chiropractics in the past, but as a result of time restraint I had to drop that part of the practice! Stay tuned you horse owners...Dr. Raines will be there for you and your equine companion!

I have to admit that it is hard to let go of my involvement in Tree of Life Veterinary Care. It has been and is my baby! Risen out of the desire to integrate western medicine with traditional Chinese veterinary medicine, chiropractics, herbal medicine and homeopathy, I started to realize my dream in 1988. In 1997 I opened the first



holistic veterinary centre in B.C. In 2001, Tree of Life Veterinary Care took root in the current Feng Shui designed building. My passion for Chinese medicine and its philosophy, comes out in the seminars I do for professional veterinarians and the pet owning public and through teaching...things I will continue to do. I am also planning to continue to fol-

low my other passion to find an answer to what causes cancer in dogs and specifically histiocytosis in the Bernese Mountain dog. Handing over the business to Dr. Erika will help free up some time to focus more on this research. I have full confidence in Dr. Erika and Dr. Heather to continue bringing the high quality of integrated veterinary care to your pets. I hope you all share that confidence with me!

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank my precious and devoted staff. I could have never done what we did without them! In closure I'd like to thank all of you for the many years of devoted confidence you have shown in me at our practice. I have known some of you (and several generations of your pets) for over 23 years! I have always enjoyed and felt privileged to be your pets family doctor! I wish you all well and hope to see you on social occasions!



Herbology Herbology

Corydalis Turtschaninovii (Yan Hu Suo) root

This is one of the most effective herbs for pain relief. It has analgesic, anti-inflammatory, anti ulcer and cardiovascular effects. It can be used for stomach pain, chest pain, upper extremities and lower extremities pain. Research shows it has an analgesic and sedating effect on the nervous system and hence it is very useful for spinal pain and the accompanying muscle spasm.

Other research shows it prevents the platelets from sticking and hence is useful for the prevention of stroke. Cardiology research shows its effect on arrhythmia. Further studies show it helps with insomnia, dizziness and vertigo. Its no wonder we use this herb a lot!



DON'T LEAVE BEHIND ROVER WHEN YOUR PUSHING UP THE CLOVER

For many people their pets are their best friends and companions.

Many people have a concern about what will happen to their pets when they can no longer take care of them; we sometimes wonder about that too! No need to worry any longer...just remember your pet in your will. Here are some helpful tips to remember:

-You can appoint a specific trustee for your pet if you have concerns that the executor of your will may not have the care and compassion to find a suitable home for your pet.

-If your pet has pet insurance make sure you mention in your will that this insurance be continued.

-Leave enough money for unexpected veterinary bills such as surgeries, MRIs, or extensive blood chemistry screenings. If you leave a generous amount for your pet, you can also request to donate what is left over at the end of your pet's life to a charitable pet society (Therapy dog training, dog training for the blind, therapeutic horse societies, SPCA etc.). Some veterinary clinics also have a special fund to help pets in need where the owners have no money or when there is no owner (for example the Marshmallow fund). You can also leave it for research in pet diseases, such as pet cancer research or holistic training for young veterinarians (American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association has such a fund). Please talk to your lawyer and remember your pet in your will so no one has to worry about their future!



Stay Tuned!!



If you enjoyed the cover article by Dr. Erika Raines, keep your eyes and ears open for upcoming lectures that she will be giving. We hope to be hosting some of these great talks right here at the clinic! We will keep you posted on dates... look for it in the local newspaper, or call us with your email address if you would like an invite that way!

Delicious Dangers



It's springtime, my favorite time of year! The birds are in my strategically placed bird feeder and little plants are coming up all over the place. My moms don't let me outside, so the only plants I get to play with are the ones in the house. I adore any kind of plant whether dead or alive, dried or fresh and love to eat lots of leaves and stems whenever I can. While this gets especially exciting around Christmas with an indoor tree provided just for my amusement, it can be dangerous in the spring.

This time of year all kinds of plants are blooming, but not all of them are healthy, or even safe, for me to eat. Not that I care, I'll eat anything that's remotely edible within my reach! Because of this it's really important that my moms keep a close watch on the plants around the house. Lilies are absolutely off limits, and most plants from bulbs are also not good. When in doubt, be sure to consult a reputable source on poisonous plants for pets or give your vet's office a quick call to make sure that the plants you keep around are safe for your furkids.

