

Litterbox Problems

Normal daily litterbox habits all owners should have:

- Clean the litterbox daily (scooping out the major nasties)
- Completely overhaul litterbox AT LEAST once weekly (change all litter)
- Keep 1 box, per cat, per floor of house MINIMUM (more than this is ideal)
- Offer a variety of brands of litter (many cats prefer unscented, clumping litters)
- Offer a variety of litterboxes (covered or not covered; in varied locations)
- Keep a record of which boxes are being used
- Keep the litterboxes in an easily accessible but LOW TRAFFIC area for privacy
- Clean up "accidents" with a pet odor removing product (like Equalizer)
- Be sure ALL CATS in the household are spayed or neutered (to avoid spraying)

When problems occur:

- Determine WHICH CAT is the problem (can be difficult in multicat households - we can help you determine who is the culprit – please ask us)
- Have that cat checked for a medical problem (urine/stool tests, possibly bloodwork)
- Is the problem urine, feces, or both?
- What was the triggering cause (when did the problem start)? Has it gotten better or worse with changes?
- Is there one certain area the cat uses, or are there many locations?
- If urine is the problem, does the cat go on horizontal (urinating) or vertical (spraying) surfaces?
- What triggered the problem?
- Litterbox in a high traffic area?
- Less than one box per cat per floor of the house?
- Changing type/brand of litter? (not offering variety?)
- Changing type of litterbox (not offering variety?)
- Changing location of litterbox? (not offering multiple locations)
- Litterboxes not clean enough for the cat's preferences?
- Strong scented cleaners/deodorizers used around box?
- Changes in normal routine in household?
- Visitors? People moving out?
- New pets? Loss of a pet?
- Less or more time spent at home than usual?
- New baby in house?
- New neighborhood cats visible through windows?
- Did the cat have a bout of illness (especially diarrhea or a bladder infection)?

If there is only one location that the cat soils, place a litterbox there and see if the cat will use it - if so, the box can then be gradually inched to a location that you would prefer in many cases. Alternatively, aluminum foil or a similar substance can be placed over

the area - cats do not like to walk on items like foil that crinkle and make noises when they walk. Also, placing a bowl of food in the area usually is a strong deterrent for most cats. Be sure that the cat does not select a new location for soiling.

Confine the cat - try a spare bedroom or a bathroom. Supply litterboxes, food, and water. The cat stays in this area until it is using the box consistently, then the accessible area is gradually increased as long as the cat continues to use only the box.

Cats can develop a "substrate preference" - the cat may simply prefer to go on carpet! Try cutting small carpet squares and placing them in a litterbox to see if the cat will use the box. If so, gradually add litter on top of the carpet fragment to try and retrain the cat to using litter.

Certain anti-anxiety medications may be needed in severe cases. Consult your vet.

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