



Feline House Soiling

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Follow the rules on this handout as a means of preventing your cat from developing house soiling problems. If your cat is currently having house soiling issues it is important that you schedule an exam with your veterinarian to determine if there is a medical cause to the house soiling, such as a urinary tract infection, before treating it as a behavioral issue.

Litter Box Rules:

Number of Boxes

- ◆ There should be at least one litter box per cat, plus one. (If you have one cat you should have at least 2 litter boxes, if you have 4 cats you should have at least 5 litter boxes).
- ◆ Keep litter boxes in separate locations.
- ◆ For multi level homes, there should be at least one litter box on each floor.

Location of Boxes:

- ◆ Avoid high traffic areas, cats like privacy and quiet
- ◆ Avoid putting the boxes next to furnaces, refrigerators, dehumidifiers, washers, dryers, etc. Anything that can kick on and scare the cat while in the box.
- ◆ Avoid putting the boxes by the cat's food, water, play and sleeping areas.

Type of Box:

- ◆ Cats prefer a large box that is uncovered with no liners
- ◆ Try various sizes and litter depths.
- ◆ Rubbermaid storage containers work great because they are large. Cut a hole for the cat to get into the tall ones. The shallow ones are great for older cats with arthritis so they don't have to jump to get into the box.
- ◆ There are litter boxes available that are large, open, and are self cleaning.

Litter Type:

- ◆ Clean boxes once to twice daily. Cats are clean animals and often do not like to urinate and defecate in the same box, and some will not use the box if it is dirty.
- ◆ Avoid scented litter
- ◆ There is clumping litter and clay non-clumping litter. Try using one or the other or a combination of both to see what your cat prefers.
- ◆ Some cats like having 10 % potting soil added to their litter to make it more appealing.
- ◆ If your cat prefers a smooth surface, place litter around the edges of the box so the middle is left smooth, eventually you may be able to add more and more litter until the cat is used to the texture of litter.

**Large Self
cleaning
Litter Box**



**Large
Rubbermaid
container used
as a litter Box.**



Behavioral Issues

There may be many reasons that cats urinate or defecate outside of the litter box, such as: marking, stress, anxiety, pain, urinary tract infections, outside stimuli, or other behavioral reasons.

Moving: One of the most common times for a cat to not use their litter box is after a recent move. To avoid this issue, restrict your cat to a small area/room with his litter box. Allow supervised time outside of the room and slowly increase the amount of freedom you allow the cat. Make sure to follow the litter box rules on the front.

Outside Stimuli: Some cats get extremely stressed out by stray cats or dogs outside the house or family members with visiting pets. The best option is to remove the outside stimuli. Call animal control to pick up the stray. If that is not an option, close blinds to help reduce the chance of your cat seeing the visiting animal.

Pain/Urinary Tract Infections/Arthritis: Any type of infection will need to be treated by your veterinarian. Arthritis can also be treated by your veterinarian and some environmental modifications. The reason the cat stops using the box is because it associates the box with pain either from arthritis or painful urination. With cats with arthritis it is important to have a very low box so they do not have to jump up to get into it and have less litter in the pan so they are not sinking into the litter causing pain.

Anxiety: Some cats just have more anxiety than others. This anxiety may cause your cat to over groom themselves and urinate and defecate in inappropriate places. This will need to be treated by your veterinarian. There are anxiety medications, a pheromone treatment (called Feliway), and even a prescription diet (called Calm Diet) that can help with your cats anxiety; which will in turn help with the inappropriate urination/defecation issues.

Cleaning: All Accidents should be cleaned with an enzymatic cleaner such as Nature's Miracle. These type of products are most effective and are designed to take the urine or feces smell out so the cat does not return to that spot and continue inappropriately using it as the bathroom.

Other deterrents: If your pet continues to use an unwanted area to go to the bathroom try placing a dish full of food on the area, use a vinyl runner with the peg side up over the area, get a motion alarm to scare the cat away from the area or if it is in the bath tub or sink, keep the water in them to deter the cat from going in there.

Call in a professional: If you have followed all the litter box rules, have seen your veterinarian, and have modified things at home and your are not getting good results; it may be time to call in a feline behavior professional to help correct the problem. Please ask our staff for recommendations on who to call.

Directions for house soiling

- * Set up an appointment with your veterinarian and check a urine sample
- * Confine your cat to a small area with the litter box, supervise all activities in other areas to avoid further accidents. Reward cat for good behavior.
- * Clean all accidents with Enzymatic cleaner
- * Check the litter box rules and be sure you are following all of them
- * Check the list of behavioral issues and correct what you can from the lists above.
- * Call a feline behavior professional if the behavior continues.

