



Litter box Issues



Cats typically know to instinctually use a litter box. If your cat is not eliminating in the litter box, it can typically be remedied.

Always contact your veterinarian to rule out a medical issue such as a urinary tract infection or even a blockage. Old age, or sickness can also make it more difficult for a cat and can be a factor when it comes to litter box issues.

If you have consulted with your vet and the issue is not medical, one of these (or several) of these factors are more than likely the cause:

- Litter box set up
- Conflict between other cats
- Environmental stressor

Litter box set up:

- Not enough litter boxes. For every cat, there should be one litter box and then one additional box.
- The litter box is not cleaned often enough or not clean enough.
- Long haired cats may be matted, making it uncomfortable to go to the bathroom.
- Not enough or too much litter in the box. Litter should be about two inches deep.
- The type of litter. Most cats prefer unscented, sand like litter. If you need scented litter, you are probably not keeping the litter box clean enough.

- The box has a cover. Or in some unusual cases, the box needs a cover.
- The location. Sometimes moving the litter box to a quiet location is the solution. Other times the litter box may be too difficult to access.
- Placing the box too close to food or water.
- The issue has been ongoing and is now a habit.

Conflict between cats

- Are any of the cats in the home marking? If so, marking is less of a litter box issue and more of a communication issue. This can be brought on due to cat or cats being unaltered, or can be an issue that is due to other cats in the home or outside of the home.
- Is one cat bullying the other? Often safely reintroducing the cats at their pace after giving them time to settle, can give results you want. Let us know if you need information about this.
- Adding extra perches can help cats feel safe by giving them vertical space. If you can't add a perch, you can stack items to create a good space.
- Cats that share a litter box
- If your cat has access or a view of outdoor cats

Environmental stressors

- Lifestyle change or stressor such as new pet, moving, even routine changes such as a new work schedule.
- Negative association with the litter box. This could be from a previous medical issue such as URI. Pain from a condition such as declawing. A loud noise occurring while in the litterbox. Or any number of things.



Make some changes

If the problem just began, try to recreate the setting when your cat was using the litter box. Cats, in general do not like change. Making things the way they once were can make a big difference. Here are examples of changes:

- Location of the litter box.
- Type of litter.
- Use enzyme based cleaners, not ammonia based cleaners. Do not steam clean unless the area has been thoroughly cleaned
- If the cat is going to the bathroom on soft areas such as carpet, try softer litter, newspaper. If the cat is adamant about eliminating on carpeting, buy a few squares of carpet (that you can clean) and place them in the litter box. Other options: dirt or grass for cats that have eliminated outdoors.
- If a cat is marking on hard surfaces, try using less litter. A square of tile or flooring can be placed in the box to encourage using the box.
- If you have more than one cat, you may need to separate them until you figure out which cat is not using the litter box.
- Routine should be as consistent as possible.
- Groom your long haired cat, at least make sure they do not have any mats.
- Some people have had success using Feliway products in conjunction with the needed changes. The product line includes: sprays, collars and air diffusers. These products can be found online or at pet stores.

Never punish the cat for improper elimination. Doing so will not help your bond and can increase the behavior. Don't repeatedly put the cat in the box, it will only make the cat feel more stressed.

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