

FELINE INAPPROPRIATE ELIMINATION

What is Feline Inappropriate Elimination?

This refers to a cat using unacceptable locations to urinate or defecate, but does not include spraying urine for communication purposes. Ten percent of cats will have elimination problems at some point in their life.

Why is my cat no longer using the litter box?

- The problem may be triggered by an underlying medical condition such as a urinary tract infection, renal disease, or diabetes mellitus.
- The litter box may not be kept clean enough for the cat's preference.
- The problem may be triggered by social interactions with other cats or other household members.
- The cat may have developed a location or substrate preference.

How is the problem treated?

- 1) Medical Exam:
 - A urinalysis and/or bloodwork may be recommended.
 - Treat any underlying problems identified.
- 2) Provide acceptable litter box choices:
 - Scoop box daily (1-2 times daily)
 - Wash box weekly in hot, soapy, water, (do not use ammonia products) rinse well, and dry. (Do every two weeks if using clumpable litter)
 - Provide one more box than the number of cats in the household and place in different locations.
 - Provide a variety of litter box types- large, uncovered, unlined litter boxes are preferred by many cats.
 - Provide different types of litter at different depths. Try unscented litter and other varieties such as clay, wheat, pelleted, crystal, etc.
- 3) Make inappropriate locations unattractive:
 - Block access to any inappropriate areas.
 - Use odor eliminators to clean areas where the cat has urinated or defecated in the past.
 - Place deterrents in the inappropriate area: the cat's food bowl, foil, double stick tape, potpourri, vinyl runner with the nub side up.
- 4) General points to remember:
 - Early intervention is vital to success.
 - Cats are not trained to use litter boxes. However, cats can be *encouraged* to use a specific substrate by taking them to the box frequently and praising them.
 - Never punish *after* your cat has urinated or defecated inappropriately. Startling the cat to stop the behavior within the first thirty seconds of showing signs (circling, digging, etc.) may help. Water guns, whistles, and foghorns may effectively startle the cat.
 - Antianxiety medication may be indicated in multi cat households.