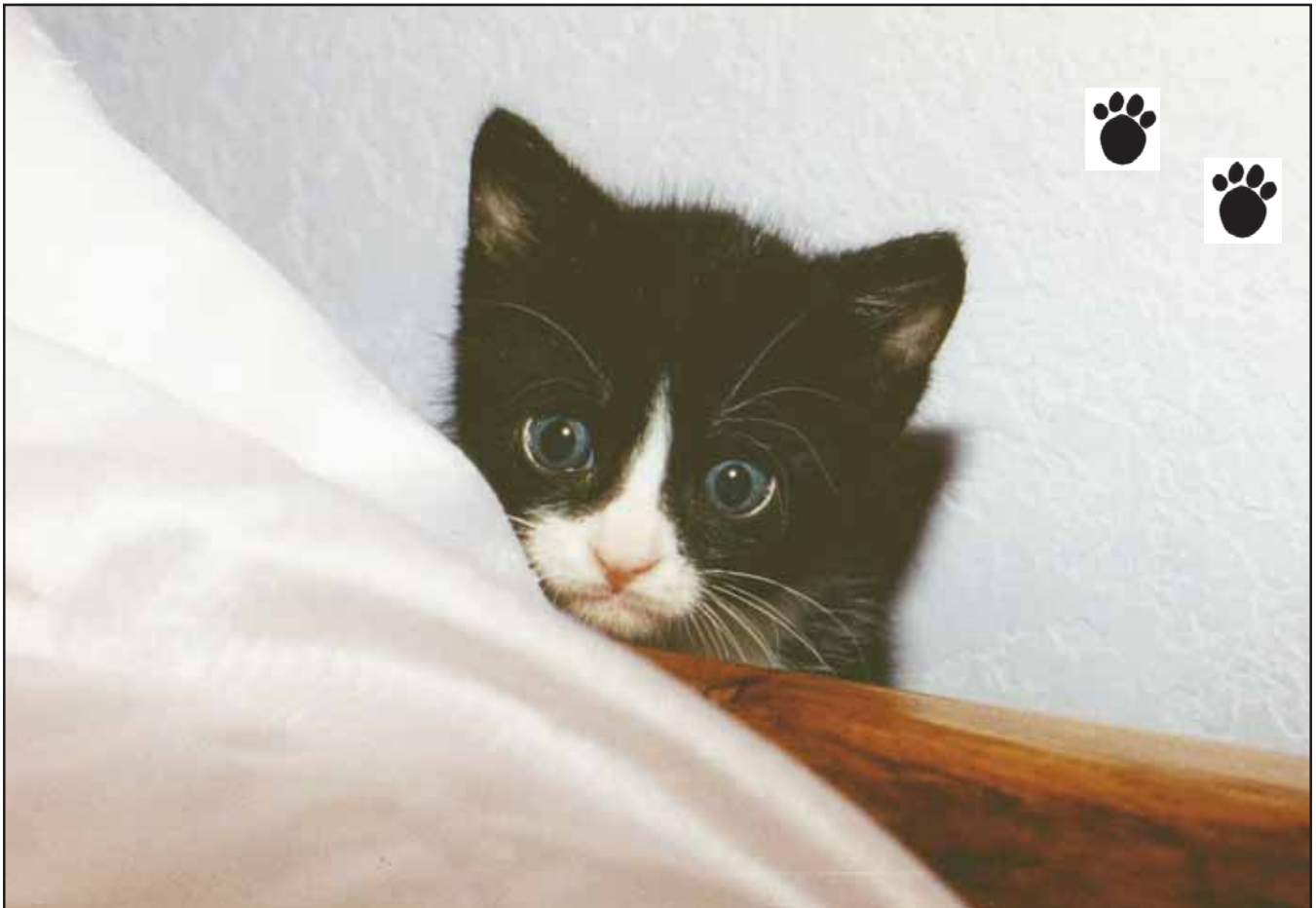




# Thinking “Inside The Box” Preventing and Problem-Solving The Litter Box



## What's Going On? Litter Box Problems in Cats

**H**ealthy cats, both young and old alike, are regularly turned into shelters and often euthanized for inappropriate elimination problems. More cats are turned in for this than for any other behavior problem according to many statistics. In fact, in the United States 51% of all behavior help line calls for cats are about litter box issues.

What going on? No pun intended, but there seems to be an epidemic of litter box problems with our domestic cats. That's the bad news. The good news is that 75-80% of the problems can be solved with some management and simple changes in the household and daily routine. The remaining percentages can also be solved, but may require more of a thought process and a little more detective work to figure out why your cat is "thinking" outside of the box.

Whether you are trying to be pro-active to avoid any future problems with your cat's litter box, or problem solving an on-going litter box crisis, it's important that you rule out any health problems such as a urinary track infection or intestinal concerns that might lead to, or be the underlying reason for your cat's inappropriate elimination. A trip to the vet is always warranted when your cat's behavior or habits change.

Solving these issues can also be helped by keeping a written log to see if there are any patterns to the problem. There have been cases of cats going outside of their litter boxes each day due to air traffic, neighbors letting the barking dogs out, and when people are getting ready to go on vacation and the packing begins, to name just a few, so keeping a log can help flesh out patterns that might otherwise go undetected is an important step to solving the problem.

Your log should include when your cat is fed, and the times of day when she used the litter box

correctly, when she made a mistake, as well as notes about any stimulus in the environment such as noises, or visitors. Doing this for a couple of weeks may show you a pattern that can then be changed or at least modified to help your cat be more comfortable in her environment.

### ***The food and water connection***

There is more and more evidence that the quality of your cat's food may be a direct or in-direct link to your cat's current or future litter box problems. In the wild, cats eat their kill which provides them with up to 80% of their daily intake of fluids. The urinary track system of a cat is a most efficient machine and acts as a super filter for toxins and waste, allowing the cat to absorb and utilize nearly their entire daily moisture intake from the small animals they eat. What little left over waste there is, it is highly concentrated and has very pungent odor—as any cat parent will note.

For years, cats seemed to be doing just fine when hunting for their own food, but the advent of dry food (which offers up convenience and less need for dentals), found its way into homes across America, and lo and behold, the onset of more litterbox issues. Modern veterinarians now recognize that too much of a good thing might just be the cause of a wide-spread problem, not to mention the increase in bladder and kidney disease.

The lack of moisture in the modern diets can be associated with the formation of crystals in the urine, causing pain, irritation, and, in the worst cases, blockages in the urinary track.

There is also more evidence pointing toward the lack of moisture and all the grains used as protein and filler in dry food that might be associated with an upraise in mega-bowel syndrome which happens when food doesn't pass through the intestinal system as quickly as designed. Food then starts to compile and allows the bowel to stretch in places where waste becomes trapped

and causes painful constipation and sometimes death if not treated.

Both of these conditions can create litter box problems since your cat feels pain when she enters the litter box to relieve herself. She then might decide it must be that darn litter box that is the cause of her discomfort.

For convenience, many feed their cats one of the **\*\*high-end dry foods minus all the grains, along with a course of quality wet food each day to prevent litter box problems associated with some of the medical issues, as well as help to get current litter box problems back on the right tract.** Others have chosen to feed raw diets, and while they these also have their benefits; they are not as convenient as some of the commercial brands.

Whether the verdict connecting the association and the upraise of litter box problems and dry food diets is in or not, your cat will thank you with extra years of life and less vet visits by eating a better quality food.

**\*\*Please see food references at the end of this article.**

### **Water**

Adding to the problem of the dry food woes is the fact that many cats are not drinking enough water on a daily basis. Cats have a powerful sense of smell and can detect even the smallest of odors. With that, it's important that cats are provided fresh water everyday. Just because the water looks clean, doesn't mean it is. Cats carry a lot of bacteria in the ridges of their teeth as a means of defense. If they bite another cat, the wound often becomes infected, and if not treated, can cause death and thus get rid of other cats challenging their territory. People that work in the animal field will tell you they would rather be bitten by a dog than a cat for this reason.

It's not hard to imagine that the bacteria from your cat's mouth can easily contaminate the water source and prevent your cat or other cats in the household from drinking the required daily amounts of water.

Just as important as changing the water daily is the quality of the water. If your water has a high mineral content it could be adding to your cat's litter box issues in expediting the formation of crystals in their urine. In addition, if your tap water has high chlorine content, or has strong smells (strong in a cat sense) your cat might not choose to drink the water you offer. Using filtered or bottled water to ensure the best quality for your cat, and to help eliminate some of the associated problems, is an easy solution.

### ***The ins and outs of the litter box***

The type of box is the next consideration for successful litter box use. Many people think it's just a matter of buying a box and keeping it clean only to be surprised when Fluffy picks a different place to eliminate. Getting all the components correct sometimes may seem as obscure as waiting for all the planets to align, but being diligent is the real answer for finding the right combination of box, litter and location.

Many factors can contribute to potential litter box problems— the type of litter, the type of box, the number of boxes, and location of boxes can all be important factors. In the wild, cats have access to lots of different places to eliminate and are able to find the surfaces they like; where as in our homes, they are often relegated to one place, with one type of surface available for elimination, which may



or may not be in a place where the cat is comfortable.

The easiest way to prevent problems or help your cat be successful with the litter box is to have a couple of boxes in different locations. This is really important if you have more than one cat, with the rule of thumb being at least one box per cat, plus one more. These should be in different locations, (not lined up next to each other) so your cat has a choice of where to go when in different parts of the home.

It may seem a little extreme to some people to have that many boxes in a limited space home, but dealing with litter box problems is much more inconvenient than having a few litter boxes around. Luckily there are some space-saving options available.

### **Types of boxes**

Covered litter boxes are such a nice convenience for us, but often found to be the root of many litter box issues for cats. The combination of multi-cat households and covered boxes is one of the more common reasons for litter box problems. This is especially true if one cat bullies the other around, or is new to the household. A timid cat can feel extremely vulnerable in a covered box since she won't be able to see the other cat who might be preparing to ambush her.

Another problem with covered boxes is that they can retain very strong odors inside (the reason humans like them), but those smells may be overly offensive to some cats, especially if it's not *their* odor, but from other cats in the house.

Some cats are just plain scared of going into a covered box and will avoid using one no matter how attractive it's been made. It might be compared to us having to use a porta-potty at night— you just never know what might be lurking in there!

Corner boxes are great for multi-cat homes since your cat will have walls behind her on two sides

and a great visual from the front to keep an eye open for things that might concern her, like other cats or a dog. These are also a favorite for saving space in smaller homes and for those people that might feel like the litter boxes have become the center pieces of their decor. These can be easily disguised by a piece of furniture or a nice little screen.

The self-scooping boxes can be great for cats that are picky about box cleanliness, but be aware that some cats find the motor noise scary and will avoid them. There are a number of new machines on the market, but most are expensive and have a number of moving parts that could be freighting for your kitty.

The basic rectangle box is the standard classic. This type of box comes in many sizes and depths which will give you lots of choices in your search to find the perfect box for your cat. The best thing is to have a couple of options since some felines prefer really deep litter and others very shallow. Giving your cat a couple of choices until you have figured out her favorite is the ideal way to discover your cat's preference. The Cats International's website suggests that all boxes be at least 16 X 22 inches to give your cat enough room to move around comfortably when in the box.

There are some cats that would prefer to have more vertical areas when they urinate and that can be accommodated by using two boxes— one flat, the other tipped on its side with one side cut out so it can sit flat inside the other box to provide a nice and tidy vertical surface. You might also entertain making some special wall guards from Plexiglas that can sit behind and under the box, but can still be easily cleaned to accommodate your cat. This is not just a male preference; many female cats also like to urinate more vertically.

Liners and litter box mats can also be problematic for some cats. Use caution when placing anything

plastic under the box, as some cats hate walking on plastic and others love to urinate on it. The same with box liners- some cats are fine with them when the litter is shallow, but other cats wouldn't consider using a box were they could feel the plastic under their feet. Again, this is the kind of detective work that you will need to do to find the right combinations for your cat.

### **Location of boxes**

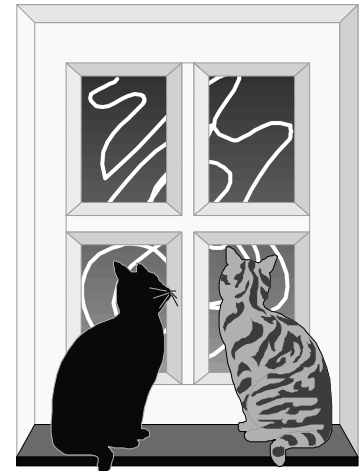
Many cats are unable to handle a noisy or busy location such as a laundry room or hallway where there is a lot of foot traffic. When considering different locations for boxes, look and listen to detect if there are things that might worry or scare your cat. Laundry rooms, while a nice area to keep the box out of sight, are often disastrous for cats. Not only are some cats scared by the noises, but the smells of soaps and bleaches are offensive to many cats.

Also consider that going to great lengths to locate and travel to her litter box might not be on your cat's agenda when the carpet or your bed is more conveniently located. That is why it is essential to consider having at least one box on each level, and each end of the house, (including the basement if you have one) to make it as convenient as possible for your cat to use it. This is especially true if you have an older cat that prefers to stay in one area of the house or in multi-cat households where the cats have established territories that they wouldn't want to leave.

Get to know your cat and watch her in different parts of the house. Watch to see if she appears fearful or cautious as she walks around in different areas. If your cat shows any signs of stress or anxiety in one area or another, relocate the box elsewhere.

Sometimes solving a litter box problem is as simple as moving the box away from sliding windows, (or any window) where your cat might see a cat or a dog outside from time to time. These visuals can be very intimidating to some cats. There was a recent case where the litter box

was next to a slider window so the woman could open it a bit to give her cat some fresh air during the day and to help keep the litter box odor down. The cat in question was pooping under a table, about 10 feet away from the box, but not all the time. As it turned out, there was a neighborhood cat marking the screen of the slider and whenever the window was open, her cat refused to go near the box since she was then able to smell the other cat right next to her box. As soon as the box was moved, the problem was solved.



If you are already experiencing problems with your cat, you may need to confine her to a smaller space with access to her box. If you decide to use confinement, think resort, not jail and enrich the area with fun things for your cat such as a climbing tree and food-dispensing toys. Also remember, that you are the most important thing in your cat's life, so visit often so she doesn't feel abandoned during this behavior modification process. You will use all of the same ideas and products that are mentioned here, but in a smaller area to prevent your cat from continuing her inappropriate elimination habits.

### **Types of litter**

From clay to clumping; from un-scented to crystals or pearls, there is an ever-growing abundance of litter box products on the market. Not all, but a good number of these products are designed with the human nose in mind, and not necessarily your cat's comfort—some of the crystal-type products are a good example. Many cats use these products one time, and refuse to step in the box again. This is because when the high-acid urine mixes with the crystals, there is a

chemical reaction that causes the crystals to make a little sizzling sound under your cat's behind—oh, my!

Litter preferences are in the eye of the beholder, so to speak, and you may have to try a number of different products to find one that your cat likes. You may also need to have a couple of different types for those cats that like to urinate in one type of litter, and poop in another.

Some finicky cats also have a preference for different types of textures. If your cat tends to have accidents on soft items such as clothing or bedding, try a fine-grain, and softer litter. If your cat goes on smooth hard surfaces such as tile, linoleum, etc., try only a tiny scattering of litter to cover the plastic of the box so she feels the hard surface under her feet. Some cats like their litterbox lined in newspaper (be careful not to use papers with colored ink as it can be toxic) and some cats will use only litter made from newspaper.

What ever type of litter you find your cat will use, be sure to stick with it and don't be lured to buy the cheaper brands when they are on sale, as it may not be such a bargain after all.

### ***Cleaning the box***

Keeping the litter box clean is important not only for health reasons, but many cats will not seek out a box that isn't manicured at least daily, and sometimes more.

As a rule, most cats will urinate where they have urinated in the past, but the majority of cats will not defecate in the exact spot as before. If you have one of those cats, it's important that you scoop the feces shortly after your cat uses the box.

Other than completely changing the litter on a regular schedule, the only other cleaning the box needs is a mild soap and warm water rinsing once a month or so. Using harsh chemicals to clean the

box is not only dangerous for cats since they can absorb chemicals into their bodies very quickly; many of the smells are deterrents to cats. Bleach is a no-no for cats, as are most products that use heavy perfumes, and especially those with citrus or pine scents. These can all be deterrents as well as toxic for your cat, so a simple cleaning routine is called for.

Lysol-type products can cause a number of physical problems, including death for cats, so avoid using deodorants to cover the smell, rather, pledge to keep the box cleaner.

If your cat does have accidents it imperative that you get the entire odor out so your cat is not drawn to use that space again. Products that use enzymes, such as Nature's Miracle or Anti-lcky-Poo, are among the best cleaners to use on cat urine.

### ***Other factors to consider***

Cats have a distinct and powerful range of smells that include a heightened ability to smell nitrogen which is found in urine, feces and rotting meat of all things (no wonder they won't touch the left over food in their bowls after a couple of hours). A cat's sense of smell is a far more powerful sense than their eye sight which is approximately 10 times less than ours— some experts describe a cat's eyesight akin to looking through the bottom of a soda bottle. (Just to clarify, what your cat gives up in their ability to see sharpness, they gain with seeing movement at a heightened level as well as being able to see that movement in very low lighting situations, although not in total darkness as some might believe.)

A cat's nose has about 200 million odor-sensitive cells, (humans have only about 5 million), making the cat's sense of smell so sensitive that they can detect a single odorant in their environment. It's no wonder that some cats are highly stressed when something is added or changed in their world.

Changes like adding a new piece of furniture, a new roommate, changing the litter to a scented brand, or even coming home with the smell of cigarettes on you could send your cat into a tail-spin and leave her feeling like she needs to re-establish her territory by urinating outside of the box.

Beyond the sense of smell, cats also get used to their routines and are very unsettled when things are not the norm. New people moving into the house or people leaving (going away to school, divorce, etc.) can upset a cat greatly, resulting in your cat using comfort areas of the house such as places where your scent remains- the bed, a couch, laundry, etc., as her toilet to make her feel more at ease with the change in routine.

Even something that might seem minor in your eyes, such as rearranging furniture, can be major and unsettling to your cat. That does not mean you can't do such things, you will just need be aware and watch your cat for any negative reactions. The correlation between lifestyle changes and inappropriate urination problems are often prevalent.

Using a product called Feliway is another way to greatly diminish your cat's anxiety. It is a cat pheromone spray or plug-in dispenser that mimics the pheromones located in a cat's cheek scent glands—the scent she rubs all over when she is happy and content! By spraying the product on surfaces or having the plug-in type in the area where your cat has had accidents will send her the message that she doesn't have to "mark" since this area already has her scent.

### **Stress**

Stress is always a component to consider if your cat is eliminating outside of the box. It may appear as though cats have it made with nothing more to do than to be doted upon by humans, but in reality, they suffer from stress symptoms just like all animals. Because of the boundaries and

limitations of our homes, cats are limited in their options for relieving stress naturally. Cats can suffer physical stressors from things like allergies or disease or display symptoms resulting from loud noises, household changes, lack of mental exercise, or general issues such as fear.

Take the Cat Stress Test at the end of this workbook to see if you need to reduce some of the stressors in your cat's life. Often just recognizing that cats suffer from stress and anxiety can help you make changes that will facilitate her to relax more, resulting in successful and continued litter box use.

### **Moving**

There is no doubt that moving is stressful for cats! Heck, moving is stressful for humans, never mind the cat! The difference is that moving is often "good stress" for humans, in that you are moving into a better situation, but for your cat, moving is usually "bad stress" that sometimes leads to inappropriate elimination.

Unless your cat has a rock of a personality, it is always a good idea when you first move to a new place to restrict your cat(s) to a single room with all her supplies, including her litter box so she doesn't get the idea that she should stake out her territory or relive her stress by leaving her mark. You should be able to gradually increase your cat's space until she finally has free roam of the new digs, but always go slow and observe your cat as her freedom increases.

Unfortunately, if you allow immediate access to the entire home directly after the move, your cat may not know where to find her box, or worse, if there were other cats previously in the home your cat may go potty where they had access, just to make sure the world knows she is now "in the house."

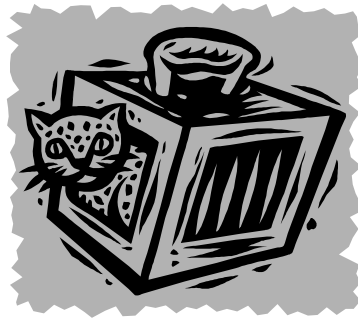
A good way to gauge how your cat might react in a novel situation is to consider her behavior when new people enter your home for a visit. Does she approach calmly and confidently? Does she run

away at first but come out after a bit, or does she hide the entire time people are there and sometimes even after they leave?

If your cat tends to hide for long periods of time when people are over, there is a good chance that in a new situation she could stay hidden for long enough periods that she might not make it out to use her litter box. This is the type of cat that should be put in a smaller area with access to her food, water, and litter box when a new situation arises – moving, new people visiting, etc. If your cat is more confident with new people and new situations, she is less likely to hide and have accidents when changes in her environment occur.

### **Physical Problems**

Your cat's health should also be considered in terms of the side height of the box. If your cat is older, ill, or has had an injury that makes it difficult for her to climb into



the box, get a box with lower sides, cut down the front of a standard box, or find something like a cookie sheet that can substitute for a litter box depending on your cat's needs.

Obese cats might have a hard time getting in and out of the tall-sided boxes as well, and may need to be accommodated with a special box. Solutions might include a lower box, and then helping your cat lose some weight after a visit to your vet for a general health check and recommendation for the weight-reduction program.

Larger cats may also have difficulty using too small a box, or a covered box so it's important to provide an amply-sized box to ensure your cat is comfy and has plenty of room to move around in the litter box.

Geriatric cats also need special consideration in not only the height of the box but the location as well, since your cat may not feel up to going all the way to the other side of the house or up or down stairs when she feels the need to go potty. Older cats and/or cats with back or leg problems can also have difficulty getting in and out of a tall-sided box. Again, a lower box in a convenient location is recommended.

### **Home Alone Cats**

Many people choose to have cats because they are “low maintenance”. Unfortunately, this is too often a euphemism for leaving lots of food and water out when people have to be away for a few days or more. What happens, however, if while you are gone your cat decides her litter box has gotten too dirty to use, a door is accidentally closed and she is trapped and unable to get to her box, or something frightens her (a car backfires outside, sirens go by, etc.) and she is so frightened she will not go back to the area where the litter box is located? (These things truly do happen sometimes.)

It is best to have a friend, family member, neighbor or pet sitter come over to check your cat daily, clean the litter box, and adhere to the regular daily feeding routine your cat is used to. Cats should be checked on every day if for no other reason than some cats may not be eating properly, might have gotten injured while you are gone and need medical attention during your absence, or may be in need of some good old fashioned human contact.

If you are going to have someone come over during your absence, it's a good idea to invite the person over for a couple visits with your cat, pre-trip to allow your cat to get to know him or her while you are still around to add comfort to the meeting.

It's also not uncommon for some cats to urinate/defecate inappropriately as you are preparing to leave for a trip. Despite how it might appear, your cat is not “mad” at you! This generally happens because your cat realizes that something is up

when your routines change right before the trip. The luggage coming out is a common trigger for cats to become anxious. Due to all the activity of getting ready to leave, your cat might feel as though her routine has changed and begin to worry. Add to that the luggage, which is an environmental change for your cat, and you have a potential problem. There have been plenty of reports of cats using the newly packed suitcase as a litter box as the result of this anxiety, so be proactive and plan to keep your cat's routine as normal as possible while keeping a close eye on your luggage!



#### **Other pets or cats**

Displacement behaviors (the calming behaviors that help your cat resolve conflict) due to stress often go unrecognized by humans when trying to figure out why their cat is eliminating somewhere other than in the box. Even when cats appear to get along, there are many tell-tail physical signs that offer clues to your cat's comfort level around other cats.

Excess grooming is a sure bet that one cat is worried. Other signs of stress can include, but are not limited to: Dilated eyes, lip-licking in the presence of the other cat, slinking around, hiding more than usual, and scratching on things more than normal.

Another often overlooked sign of stress is excess water drinking. The chemicals of stress require more fluids for their production so if you have noticed the water levels in the bowl going down faster than usual (and there is not a medical reason) this could be a good clue that your cat is feeling some extra pressure in her life. This would also cause your cat to urinate more often and if she is not comfortable getting to the box, this might be the reason she chooses more readily accessible locations to eliminate.

Litter box problems are also seen more often when cats have access both in and outside of the home since your cat's elimination outside may attract other cats to the area. This could convince your cat to stake out and mark her territory, including the inside of the house. (Both male and female cats can and do spray to mark territory.)

Even if you never allow your own cat outside, cats outside your home may also have an effect on your cat's litter box habits, and sometimes just seeing other cats through the window can trigger episodes of inappropriate elimination. A product called a Scarecrow motion detection water sprinkler can humanely keep unwanted cats (and other critters) out of your yard. These can be found online at a number of sites, including Amazon.com. The Scarecrow is also a good way to keep neighborhood cats from urinating on your doors, as is so often the case with unaltered male cats that are left outside.

Whether it's other cats, dogs or even birds for some cats, the presence of another animal in the home might affect successful litter box use.

The most common situations are where one cat is stalking the other and preventing her from getting to the box, or she is being ambushed by the bully cat while she is actually using the litter box.

Behavior phone calls about cats that once got along, but are now fighting can often be attributed to one of the cats having gone to the vet for treatment, being groomed, or even something like an injury or infection can change the household dynamics enough that cats will eliminate outside of their boxes to re-establish their territory, or in fear of encountering what they believe is a different animal.

Whenever you take one of the cats to be groomed or for a vet visit, plan on taking some extra time re-introducing her to the others once you are back home again.



Be sure to have litter boxes in each of the areas where the cats are confined.

If your cat has had to have anesthesia, take extra precaution that you wait until she has had a full 24 hours recovery before allowing the cats to interact again since she won't be able to defend herself if the other cat attacks.

Dogs chasing cats, (in play or prey) is another common connection to cats not using their litter boxes successfully. It's important that your cat feel safe and have places to go where dogs are not allowed to ensure she has uninhibited access to her litter boxes. Baby gates are wonderful for keeping dogs out of areas where your cat's litter box is housed.

### ***Don't forget training***

Using positive reinforcement training can also help your cat to be consistent with the litter box and speed along any rehabilitation program. Even if your cat is doing fine with her litter box, use positive reinforcement to cement good behaviors for any future changes that might visit your life. After your cat has used her box successfully tell her, "Good girl," pet her or toss her a yummy treat—or any combination of these to really send home the message that it would be good to repeat that behavior. That will make using her box a really positive experience.

Animals often stop using the behaviors we would like simply because they have not received any feedback about whether or not it was a good choice. As humans, we tend to ignore the acceptable behaviors and only give attention to the unwanted behaviors. This often backfires since many animals will continue to do the unwanted behaviors because that's when we interact with them. Attention is often the very thing they want—even if it seems like a negative to us! By giving your cat lots of feedback whenever she is doing something you like, she will choose those behaviors to get your attention rather than those that drive you crazy, like eliminating outside of the box.

If your cat is already having a difficult time with the litter box, start rewarding her for just being in the same room with it, or close to it. Find food treats that your cat loves and toss them close to the litter box (not too close or your cat might not like eating them near her toilet), and add verbal praise and petting as she eats. Of course, if your cat uses the litter box successfully, let her know what a wonderful cat she is by using verbal praise, petting and treats. This positive connection to the litter box will help your rehabilitation program as you move forward with retraining your cat.

Remember not to use any punishment with your cat—even if you catch her in the act of going in the wrong place. Just quietly pick her up and place her in her box if you catch her in the act. Don't talk to her and don't rush with her hanging out in front of your body to the nearest litter box. That could very well scare her enough so she never wants to set foot into the litter box again. Carefully pick her up, don't talk to her, and gently set her in the litter box. Once she is in the box, you can pet and talk to her to encourage her to finish what she started.

### ***Conclusion***

Being pro-active with the litter box, feeding your cat the best food you can supply and understanding more about your cat's body language can greatly reduce future problems with the litter box.

If you are already experiencing problems, and you feel you have gone to great lengths to try and promote successful litter box use, it might be time to call in an expert in cat behavior. This person should be willing to come to your home and look at your environment and space to see if there is something you might have missed, as well as set up a behavior modification plan for you to follow.

Having your cat seen by a holistic veterinarian for alternative treatments should also be an option. Many cats are helped with herbs to help calm them, body work such as chiropractic adjustments,

and homeopathic remedies to work on imbalances in their bodies. Many of these treatments augment the standard management and prevention, as well as set your cat on a healthier path for life.

Realistic expectations and consistency are the final pieces to solving litter box puzzle. If your cat has been having accidents outside of the box for months or years, changing her behavior is not going to happen overnight. It may take a good deal of time to override the current reinforcement history of going outside of the box, and it's important to follow through until the problem is solved.

It's your commitment that will help you solve the problem, and that commitment includes always knowing where your cat is (a collar with a bell is useful here) or having her in your sight at all times to prevent accidents. If you can't keep an eye on her, confining her to a smaller space will prevent her from adding to her reinforcement history of accidents. Over all, if you make the commitment and set realistic goals during the behavior modification process you will soon have a cat that is successful at using her litter box.

***Recommended foods:***

Blue Buffalo

Solid Gold

Wellness

Natural Balance

Paul Newman's 2nd Generation

Flint River

Drs Foster and Smith

Raw diets- talk to your vet or supplier about the proper diet

Home cooked diets that are designed by a vet or an expert in the field are also a good alternative to commercial food.



## Stress Test For Your Cat

Circle the number that best fits your cat. Poor = 1 Fair = 2 Good = 3 Very Good = 4 Excellent = 5

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1	Cat is comfortable with all noises/sounds	1	2	3	4	5
2	Cat is comfortable around all men	1	2	3	4	5
3	Cat is comfortable around toddlers/babies	1	2	3	4	5
4	Cat comes out to visit when strangers come over	1	2	3	4	5
5	Cat loves attention from strangers	1	2	3	4	5
6	Cat is comfortable being touched all over	1	2	3	4	5
7	Cat is comfortable around other cats	1	2	3	4	5
8	Cat is comfortable around other animals	1	2	3	4	5
9	Cat is comfortable being left with someone he/she knows	1	2	3	4	5
10	Cat has not changed homes in the last six months	1	2	3	4	5
11	Cat always eats his/her meals, even when you are on vacation	1	2	3	4	5
12	Cat has never eliminated on human items such as clothing or bed	1	2	3	4	5
13	Cat has never been punished with squirt bottle, shaker can or physical punishments	1	2	3	4	5
14	Cat never hides and has to be removed to get him or her out of the hiding place	1	2	3	4	5
15	Cat allows touching from strangers	1	2	3	4	5
16	Cat never meows for attention	1	2	3	4	5
17	Cat is never allowed outside	1	2	3	4	5
18	Cat rarely shows signs of stress via excess grooming, scratching or scent marking	1	2	3	4	5
19	Cat never hisses or growls at people	1	2	3	4	5
20	Cat eats food without high-grain content	1	2	3	4	5
21	Cat has only lived in one household	1	2	3	4	5
22	Cat has regular veterinary health checks	1	2	3	4	5
23	Cat receives daily mental exercise or enrichments	1	2	3	4	5
24	Cat is provided with fresh filtered or bottled water daily	1	2	3	4	5

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### Answers:

**Mostly 1-2's** Needs a stress reduction program

**Mostly 3-4's** Not too bad, but there are always ways to improve.

**Mostly 2-3's** Could use some behavior modification on the troubled areas

**Mostly 4-5's** Good for you for having a relaxed cat!

