

Preventing Litter Box Problems

Cats are preprogrammed to seek a soft substrate in which to bury their waste. This is awesome for us because they virtually train themselves to use a litter box. Unfortunately, cats also hide their stress and it can sometimes show up as inappropriate elimination. This checklist will help you make your cat's litter box experience as stress free as possible.

Not all cats are the same and most will want to use their litter box even if the conditions are not ideal. However, change or other stressors can make previously acceptable conditions too hard to handle. Take a moment to remember a stressful day that you had and how much harder it was to cope with backed up traffic or a long line at the grocery store. These tips will help to keep your cat from finding his litter box too much to deal with.

Scoop the litter box AT LEAST once a day daily: Dirty litter boxes are a leading cause of litter box issues.

About the Litter Box

Ideal number of litter boxes = 1 for each cat +1: These litter boxes should be in different parts of the home. Multiple litter boxes next to each other is the same as one really large box. Boxes in different locations in the home ensure that one cat cannot guard all the boxes and prevent a house mate from using the litter box. Additionally, a box on every level of your home will help if your kitty has an urgent need to use the box.

Place boxes in a quiet area with at least two entrance/exits: Unexpected or loud noises while a cat is in their box can be scary and cause future litter box avoidance. Multiple entrance/exits prevent one cat from ambushing another cat while they are in or leaving the litter box.

Use large litter boxes: A litter box should be at least 1.5 times the size of the cat. A cat should have at least enough room to turn around in the box without hitting the sides.

Use Open Boxes: Hooded boxes trap odors. This makes hooded boxes more attractive to humans but much less attractive to cats. Hooded boxes also have only one entrance/exit.

Use boxes without liners: Cats do not like the sound or feel of litter box liners. A cat's claws may also catch on the liner. A way to avoid this is pouring the litter deeper, but this can make the cat's footing unstable. This makes the litter box experience unpleasant for the cat and messy for you.

About the Litter

Use clumping litter: Clumping litter is softer and much more comfortable to walk on. Pellets, crystals and other non-clumping litter are not only more uncomfortable to walk on, they don't allow for complete urine removal.

Use unscented litter: Strong perfumes can put a cat off its box. A cat's nose is much more sensitive than ours. If you can smell it, the scent of the litter is too strong.

Keep the litter about 2 inches deep: This is deep enough to allow kitty to dig and cover without causing them to "sink in" and become unstable.

****Keep in mind that every cat is different and their preferences vary. These are merely suggestions, not requirements!**