

Feline House Soiling

Feline house soiling is a common behavioral problem. It can lead to a cat's banishment outdoors, relinquishment, or euthanasia. The main causes of house soiling in cats include underlying medical problems, urine marking, and litterbox aversions. A thorough history, physical examination, and diagnostic tests can determine a diagnosis and treatment. Underlying medical conditions can sometimes cause pain when urinating or defecating which the cat can associate with use of the litterbox. Make sure your cat is thoroughly examined, ruling out any medical conditions, before assuming the house soiling is a behavioral problem.

This newsletter will focus on litterbox aversions and how we can solve the litter and litterbox related house soiling problems in your cat.

The best litter products have a substrate that cats like the feel of, provide odor control and have minimal dust. Cats have a strong preference for finely granular sandlike materials, like clumping or scoopable litter. In some cats, scented litter is a risk factor for elimination problems. If cats with house soiling issues are offered a scented litter, try offering a nonscented litter. Cats consider a heavily soiled box aversive. Daily scooping and discarding of waste are advised, as well as a weekly cleaning and bleaching of the entire box. Activated carbon has been incorporated into some litters to reduce fecal odor and may help in preventing and treating litterbox problems.

Another possible cause of litterbox aversion may be due to a small box size. Litterboxes should be 1 ½ times the length of the cat's body. Purchase large or jumbo sized litterboxes for your cat.

Some cats have an aversion to the placement of the litterbox. If it is in an area where there is too much activity or loud noises, try to move the litterbox to a quieter more private location. Also, make sure there are plenty of litterboxes for the amount of cats in the household. There should be one litterbox per cat plus one extra one.

The best way to identify an individual cat's set of preferences is to offer a variety of litter choices, box styles and box placements and see which one the cat preferentially uses.