



HOW CAN I GET MY CAT TO USE THE LITTER BOX?

- Keep the litter box extremely clean. Scoop at least once a day and change the litter completely every four to five days. If you use scoopable litter, you may not need to change the litter as frequently, although you will have to refill it every time you clean it.
- If you have changed the brand or type of litter, change back to the litter your cat used before.
- If your cat is used to being outdoors, try adding some soil to the box. Vary the depth of the litter.
- Add a new box in a different location, and use a different type of litter in the new box. Make sure that the litter box isn't near an appliance (such as a furnace) that makes noise, or in an area of your home that your cat doesn't frequent.
- If you have multiple cats, provide one litter box for each cat, plus one extra box in a different location.
- Clean soiled areas immediately, using appropriate products. Special enzyme products for removing stains and odours are available at pet supply stores.

SHOULD I PUNISH MY CAT?

Don't ever punish your cat for eliminating outside of the litter box. Do nothing but clean it up. Rubbing your cat's nose in it or taking her to the spot and scolding her will only make your cat afraid of you or afraid to eliminate in your presence. Animals don't understand punishment after the fact, and punishing them will often make matters worse.

WHAT IF I CATCH MY CAT IN THE ACT?

If you catch your cat in the act of eliminating outside the litter box, do something to interrupt him, but be careful not to scare your cat. Immediately take your cat to the litter box and set him on the floor nearby. If your cat wanders over to the litter box, wait and praise your cat after he eliminates in the box. If your cat takes off in another direction, he may want privacy, so watch from afar until your cat goes back to the litter box and eliminates, then praise him.

WHAT IF I JUST CAN'T LIVE WITH THE SITUATION?

Giving up an animal is never easy for the owner or the pet. Sometimes, despite your best efforts, the problem may persist. Consult your veterinarian to discuss new strategies. If that doesn't work, and you feel you simply can't live with the situation, make sure the solution to your problem doesn't create a bigger one for your pet. Explore all options. Try to find a caring and responsible new home for your cat, but be honest about your pet and why you must rehome her. It is not fair to your pet to send her to a new home with false expectations of her behaviour or medical requirements. You can also surrender your pet to the Ottawa Humane Society.

For more information on surrendering your pet, contact us at 613-725-3166 ext. 262.

A clean litter box can eliminate more than odours. It may solve your house-soiling problems.

HOUSE SOILING BY CATS

For some reason, your cat is not using the litter box. But with a little investigation, you can find out what's wrong and often quickly resolve the problem.



Programs and services provided by the Ottawa Humane Society are made possible thanks to your financial support.

Please support the animals in our community.



245 WEST HUNT CLUB ROAD, OTTAWA ON K2E 1A6
WWW.OTTAWAHUMANE.CA

Tel: 613-725-3166

email: ohs@ottawahumane.ca

Charitable #: 123264715 RR0001

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WWW.OTTAWAHUMANE.CA

WHY WON'T MY CAT USE THE LITTER BOX?

House soiling is one of the most common behaviour problems in cats. It's normal for cats to have surface and location preferences for elimination. But when these preferences include the laundry basket, your bed or your carpeting, you have cause for concern. However, there are a number of reasons cats break their litter training. To get to the root of the problem, you may have to play Sherlock Holmes for awhile!

If your cat isn't using the litter box, determine the cause to eliminate the problem.

COULD THERE BE A MEDICAL CAUSE?

Health problems can cause litter box problems, and cats don't usually act sick, even when they are. For this reason, it's important to check with your veterinarian first. Typical medical causes include painful urination or bowel movements due to bladder infections, intestinal disorders and some forms of arthritis. Because of the discomfort associated with eliminating, your cat may avoid the litter box and seek other places for elimination, hoping to find a location where it does not hurt. The only way a cat can communicate that there is a problem is by showing you — and that may translate into house soiling. Only a trip to the veterinarian for a thorough physical exam — which may include a urinalysis — can rule out a medical problem.

Your cat may be sick. The first step in solving house-soiling problems is a trip to the vet.

WHY AM I FINDING CAT URINE ON WALLS AND DOORS?

Your cat may be spraying. Spraying is urine-marking behaviour that demonstrates ownership of his or her territory. It can occur because neighbourhood cats are outside or because of conflicts between cats in a multi-cat household. Unfamiliar objects or people in the house can also cause the behaviour. Spraying has nothing to do with litter box habits.

When a cat sprays, he stands up, backs up against a vertical surface and deposits urine at cat height against curtains, doors, furniture and other solid surfaces. The tail may quiver and he may alternately lift his hind feet while spraying. Male, female, spayed or neutered cats of any age may spray, although the behaviour is most common in un-neutered males and females in heat.



Spraying problems can be drastically reduced or even completely resolved with:

- Spaying or neutering any unaltered cats in the household.
- Discouraging the presence of neighbourhood cats (try blocking off windows where your cat can see neighbourhood cats).
- Resolving conflicts between cats in the household (or with previous cats! If you've just moved into a space where cats once lived, your cat may be spraying in reaction to old urine markings left by the previous cat, which may require some extra cleaning).
- Identifying any territorial issues for your cat (cats have space requirements — especially with regard to sharing their house with other animals — so talk to your vet about ensuring that your cat has enough space).
- Dealing with other sources of stress (for example, a new baby, new pet, moving or more subtle changes in your lifestyle). Giving your cat as much attention as possible during household changes is an excellent method to reduce stress-induced behaviours in your pet.



IF IT'S NOT URINE-MARKING, WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Your cat may have decided the litter box is an unpleasant place in which to eliminate if:

- The box is not kept clean enough for her.
- He has experienced painful urination or defecation in the box due to a medical problem.
- She has been startled by a noise while using the box, or if the litter box is in a noisy place.
- He is stressed or in pain.
- She has been surprised by a person or another pet while in the box.
- He associates the box with punishment.
- She does not have easy access to the litter box.

Suloni was surprised to discover her normally fastidious cat had urinated on the carpet. Luckily for Princess, Suloni's first reaction was worry, not anger. A trip to the vet revealed Princess had a bladder infection. Pilling her cat wasn't fun, but Princess soon got better and Suloni found no more surprises on her carpet.