

WHEN KITTY DOESN'T USE THE LITTER BOX!

"Cleanliness in the cat world is usually a virtue put above godliness." ~ Carl Van Vechten, American writer

Inappropriate urination is the most common and least acceptable behavioral problem seen in cats. There are a variety of reasons that a cat may stop using its litter box, including both medical and environmental changes.

Have your cat examined by a vet and possibly have some test done. Medical caused of inappropriate urination in cats can include diabetes, kidney disease, liver disease, hyperthyroidism, urinary tract infections, urinary crystals or stones, constipation, senility and bone/joint problems.

If medical problems have been ruled out or cured, then environmental modification or medication may be required. Problems can include:

1. Territorial conflict in a multiple cat home. Sometimes a dominant cat will even attack a subordinate cat in the litter box.
2. Cats often refuse to use a dirty litter box.
3. They may not like the location, size and/or the type of litter box (covered vs. open).
4. Changes in a routine such as different people in the home, a move, or new animals can cause stress for your cat.
5. There may be a stray cat outside of the home influencing an indoor cat to mark its territory.

Steps for a Retraining Program

A retraining program involves some basic tips, making the litter box more appealing and discouraging the use of alternative sites.

1. Stop all punishment when the cat makes a mistake. It is okay to spray it with a water bottle or make a loud noise, but then take it to the litter box.
2. Keep the food dishes and litter box in separate areas.

3. Spend extra time with you cat. At least 15 to 20 minutes a day of one on one time.
4. Keep litter box as clean as possible. Scoop daily and changing litter weekly.
5. Have a good sized litter box. At least 1 1/2 times the length of the cat.
6. Provide one litter box per cat, plus one extra.
7. Do not use litter liners such as newspaper or plastic.
8. Wash litter box with warm soapy water only, rinsing and drying well after. Avoid strong smelling cleaning solutions or disinfectants.
9. Keep the litter box in a quiet place away from the main traffic areas of the home.
10. Provide litter boxes in different location through out the home.
11. Avoid scented or deodorized litter, use baking soda instead.
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12. Buy a new litter box if the current ones are over a year old. The smells will penetrate the surface and cannot be removed with cleaning.

How to Discourage Elimination in Alternate Sites

If a cat prefers a certain site, then put a litter box there, at least temporarily. Once it is using the litter box, it can slowly be moved to a more acceptable site. Alternately, feed the cat in the area it tends to eliminate. If that happens to be several locations, put a bowl at each site.

Use preferred area for an alternative purpose such as a scratching post or play area.

Put something on the surface where the cat urinates. If on the floor, use plastic runners. Tin foil or plastic can also be used on surface. Use double sided tape to attach if needed.

Perhaps put a piece of furniture over the used area once it is cleaned.

If cat is urinating in potted plants, try removing plants to a blocked off area. I only have hanging plants in my home. You can try covering the soil with a wire mesh or aluminum foil also.

Clean area where cat urinated with an odor neutralizing product. Avoid cleaning products that contain ammonia as this smells similar to urine and may encourage the behavior.