



What is inappropriate elimination?

Cats that are urinating and/or defecating outside the litterbox are inappropriately eliminating.

What are common causes of inappropriate elimination?

Environmental/Social Issues: The number, size, & location of the box(es) can often help manage this, along with a strict cleaning regimen & evaluating the litter itself. These points are all covered in more depth below.

Marking Behavior: Urine marking (which can take form of urine spraying) is a normal part of feline behavior and is done for the purpose of communication. Cats often target items with new or unrecognized smells. Marking around doorways & windows indicates concern for a threat outside the home. Marking in hallways, stairways, or centers of rooms can indicate stress within the home. Spaying and neutering may reduce this behavior.

Idiopathic Cystitis: Non-infection related inflammation of the urinary bladder caused by chronic stress and anxiety. Treatment may involve management of environmental and social issues as outlined above, decreasing stressors, anti-anxiety medication and implementing environmental enrichment and behavior modification techniques.

Medical Problems: Your veterinarian will be able to diagnose or rule out any medical conditions responsible for inappropriate elimination. Physical examination and diagnostic testing check for infections, cystitis, arthritis, kidney problems, and diabetes, among others. Additional tests, such as urine analysis/culture, abdominal radiographs, abdominal ultrasound, complete blood count, and biochemical profile can provide a more complete diagnostic picture. Additional diagnostic test may be needed for cases of house-soiling with feces.

How many litter boxes should I have?

The general rule of thumb is to have one litter box for each cat, plus one extra box.

How do I know what size & type of litter box is appropriate for my cat?

In general, bigger is better and many commercial litter boxes are too small. Litter boxes should be 1.5 times the length of your cat from the nose to the base of the tail. Suitable alternatives can include low-sided concrete mixing trays or storage containers. Older cats need a low entry, so you can cut down the side, but make sure you inspect for any sharp edges. These can easily be covered with duct tape.

Where should I place the litter box?

Avoid placing food and water close to the litter box. Cats usually prefer quiet, private places. Keep the litter boxes apart in different locations because your cat considers boxes close to each other one large litter box. In a multi-level home, place a litter box on each level. If you have an older cat, place a litter box on the level where the cat spends the most time for easy accessibility. Ideally litter boxes should be approachable from multiple angles, so the cat doesn't feel cornered or trapped while in the vulnerable position of eliminating. Boxes with lids or in small, enclosed spaces, such as closets, can also contribute to litter box related anxiety. If a cat is toileting away from its box, try placing an additional litter box at the new site (temporarily or permanently) to get the cat using a box again.

What type of litter should I be using?

You may need to try different types of litter until the cat indicates its preference. For preference evaluation, provide multiple boxes with different litters and variable litter depths. Many cats dislike aromatic or dusty litters, litter deodorizers, and box liners. Most cats prefer soft unscented clumping litters. If a cat is soiling on soft surfaces like laundry or beds, it may be an indication that more litter is desired in the box. The opposite can also be true; if a cat is soiling on hard flooring surfaces, they may need less litter in the box.

Litter Box Hygiene Schedule:

Remove waste at a minimum of once per day and add litter as needed. Remove all litter & wash the box every 1-4 weeks using anti-bacterial soap and hot water only. Avoid strong chemicals or any ammonia-based products. Dry thoroughly before adding fresh litter.

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