



# BEHAVIOR & TRAINING



## LITTER BOX PROBLEMS?

A litter box problem, most simply, is one in which your cat is not using his/her litter box regularly, or sometimes not at all.

There are many reasons why a cat or kitten might not use the litter box. Solving this issue requires some detective work in order to figure out what works for your individual cat. It is encouraged for all owners to make one change at a time, in order to identify what is helpful. Keeping a journal might help the owner learn more about his / her cat's preferences.

## REASONS WHY YOUR CAT MAY NOT BE USING THE LITTER BOX:

**CLEANING THE LITTERBOX:** Some cats will avoid the litter box because it is not cleaned often enough and/or not cleaned thoroughly. It is important to scoop the cat's box at least two times per day as well as deep clean the box once per week. When cleaning the box, be mindful of the detergents you use. If the chemicals are very potent in smell, this may deter your cat from using the box even though it has been cleaned.

**NOT ENOUGH BOXES:** The general rule of "cat" is to have one more litter box than number of cats. For example, if you have one cat in the home, you should have two litter boxes. This gives the cat choice. If your home has two floors, you should definitely have a box for each floor.

**LITTERBOX PLACEMENT:** Be mindful of the location of the litter box. For example, try not to place your cat's litter box next to the washer and dryer. The sounds of the machines may frighten the cat; therefore, he or she avoids the litter box.

**LITTER BOX AESTHETICS:** Sometimes cats avoid the litter box because it is too small. The litter box should be double the size of the cat to allow for movement. The litter box should also be easy for the cat to step inside. Liners and hoods can also be a deterrent for cats. When placing litter in the box, make sure the litter is between 1-2 inches deep. *Types of litter* can also deter cats—you may have to try a few before you find the right match.

**CONFLICT:** Household stress can cause a cat to eliminate outside the litter box. Conflict may include moving; change in household routine; or conflict between cats in the home. Identify which trigger may be causing your cat stress and make the necessary changes to help reduce your cat's stress level.

**MEDICAL ISSUES:** If your cat has ongoing litter box issues, the best thing to do first is rule out any medical concerns, such as a urinary tract infection, kidney stones, blockage, just to name a few. Call your local veterinarian to schedule an appointment.