

Litter Box Recommendations

Whether you are a new cat owner, the owner of a cat with a litter box problem, or a regular cat owner who wants to stay informed, you should read this information on litter boxes.

Litter box problems can be a common source of frustration for cat owners. Following the recommendations below can help prevent inappropriate elimination and help keep your cat healthy. If your cat is urinating or defecating outside the box, don't give up! There is help. The most important thing to remember is to consult your veterinarian. These behaviors can be signs of serious medical problems that need to be treated. Below are basic litter box recommendations to be used as prevention or in conjunction with any treatments your veterinarian may have prescribed.

Number of Boxes

Provide one litter box per cat plus one. So, if you have two cats, you need three litter boxes. If you have three cats, you need four litter boxes etc. Ideally, the litter box should be approximately twice the length of your cat's body.

Cleaning

Litter boxes should be scooped (urine and feces removed) daily. In addition, they should be completely emptied, cleaned, and refilled weekly. Be sure to rinse any cleaning agents completely before adding more litter. Keeping a box clean can prevent odor build up in the box and in your house. This makes a more desirable place for your cat to eliminate. It also prevents many parasites from completing their life cycle.

Substrate

There are many different substrates available for cat litter. Choose a substrate that is appropriate for your cat. Your veterinarian may have already made a suggestion for a specific type of litter depending on your cat's problem. For example, for cats with a history of respiratory problems we generally recommend a dust-free litter. If your cat has recently had a surgical procedure, use a non-clumping or pelleted litter such as 'good mews' to avoid litter clumping at the healing incision site. Some cats can be picky about what type of litter they prefer to use; try different substrates to find a type that your cat prefers.

Open vs Covered

Generally we recommend open litter boxes. This keeps odor and dust from building up into an unpleasant environment for your cat.

Placement of Litter Boxes

Do not place litter next to food or water bowls. If your cat is eliminating outside the box, (in addition to a medical work up with your veterinarian!) place a litter box over the area the cat has been using. As the cat starts using the box instead of the inappropriate area, slowly move the placement of the box to a more desirable area (a few feet a day). Be sure to clean any areas of inappropriate elimination completely.

Remember, if your cat is eliminating outside of the box, consult your veterinarian to rule out medical problems as well as following the recommendations above.