

# Answers to your questions about inappropriate elimination



Ultra F./Getty images

## How can I fix behavioral problems?

Two areas to carefully consider are litter box location and maintenance. Some cats require the litter box to be kept very clean. This means at least removing feces every day. Also, keep in mind that some cats prefer certain types of litter, like clay litter or clumping litter. And if the litter box is several years old, toss it and start again with a new one.

Location of the litter box is key. Cats need a little bit of privacy and quiet and will use a box that's in an easy-to-access location. Older cats may not go up or down stairs to use the box. If there are multiple cats in the home, you'll need multiple litter boxes.

## Why is my cat spraying on surfaces in my home?

Spraying is common feline marking behavior. This type of marking includes spraying urine on vertical locations, as well as the elimination of small amounts of urine in multiple locations. Cats may mark their environment due to stress or anxiety or the presence of other cats inside or outside the home.

**W**hen your cat urinates everywhere in your home except in its litter box, your frustration levels rise. Seek help from your veterinarian who can determine whether the problem is medical or behavioral. Here are some commonly asked questions about inappropriate elimination.

## Why is my cat urinating outside the litter box?

Urinary tract diseases can cause inappropriate elimination. There are many other conditions, such as bladder infections, that can cause pain and an increased urgency to urinate. Also, medical conditions that lead to discomfort of the nerves, muscles, or joints may cause your cat to be unable to climb into the litter box or get into a comfortable position for elimination.

If elimination is associated with pain or discomfort or if access to the litter box is difficult or uncomfortable, your cat may urinate outside the box. A complete physical exam, urinalysis, and additional diagnostic tests can help rule out medical problems.

## What if my cat doesn't have a medical condition?

If your veterinarian determines that medical conditions that can cause inappropriate elimination aren't present in your cat, consider the location of the litter box, the type of litter you're using, or if your cat is frustrated or stressed. Are there any new pets in the house? Are there any patterns to the inappropriate elimination, such as time of day, days of the week, or seasonal variations? Relationships between the cat and other people or pets in the household need to be considered.

## The bottom line

Dealing with a cat's elimination problem in your home isn't fun. Work with your veterinarian to get to the root of the problem.

Here are some tips to keep in mind:

- With your veterinarian, determine if any medical factors are at play.
- Consider any factors in your home that may be causing your cat stress, frustration, or anxiety.
- Provide the cat with a quiet area where it can get away and relax.
- Make sure the litter box is in a quiet spot and that each cat in your home has its own box.
- Experiment with various types of litter and clean the litter box as often as once a day.