

PET PEEVES PERIODICAL

A newsletter dedicated to preserving the human-animal bond through behavior counseling.



The Perfect Litterbox



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As we all know, cats are a one of a kind and can be very particular about their surroundings. This of course, includes their litterbox. If you have never had a cat that has had an issue with the litterbox, consider yourself lucky!! There are many reasons a cat will stop using a litterbox, whether it be medical or behavioral. This article will not address any of those issues, but will help you figure out what your cat finds most and least desirable about his toilet area.

Cats are very preferential animals, and each one has different likes and dislikes when it comes to the litterbox area. It is recommended when you first get a cat, to offer what we like to call a litterbox "buffet" to see what kind of bathroom your cat prefers. Your "buffet" should include clumping and traditional clay litter in different boxes. Of course these litters are offered in unscented and scented varieties, so you need to get each of those as well to determine which the cat favors. Most humans prefer the scented varieties, while most cats prefer the unscented! As far as the litterbox itself goes, generally the bigger the better and this is true for all sizes of cats. The traditional litterbox that most stores offer is NOT big enough. Most cats prefer unhooded boxes because they don't block the cat's vision, but you can offer a hooded variety in your "buffet" to see which one your cat likes best. When you set up your "buffet", offer multiple choices of all of the above examples, and the box that is used the most will be your cat's box of choice. Keep in mind some cats like to have one box designated for

urine and another for feces.

More likes – most cats prefer a thin layer of litter in the box. They tend to not like their feet to sink into the litter. They also really like to have their box scooped at least once daily (twice is even better). At least one box on each level of the house that the cat has access to is essential. They really like to have their box located out of high traffic areas, but still need to be conveniently located, as well as highly accessible. Cats love to have their box open on all sides, too. Don't put it in a dead end zone. This is especially important if you have a multiple cat household. Cats don't like to be ambushed when coming out of the box, and prefer to have more than one escape route.

Dislikes – Cats don't like liners in their boxes. They don't like the feel or sound, and the liners also tend to retain odors. Keep the box away from noisy appliances. This includes washers, dryers, furnaces, and anything that could make a noise at an untimely moment. Many cats will develop a litterbox avoidance issue, because of that one time they got spooked while trying to urinate or defecate. Do not clean the box with detergents or cleansers. These will just convert the urine smell to ammonia. To clean your box, just use warm water and if necessary, baking soda. Cats don't like their litterbox near their food area, either. I'm pretty sure you wouldn't go to the bathroom in your kitchen! Yuck!!

Some other helpful tidbits – get new boxes every couple of years, whether they

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RESOURCES

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Landsberg, G., W. Hunthausen, and L. Ackerman. *Handbook of Behavior Problems of the Dog and Cat*. 2nd ed. Elsevier Science Limited, 2003

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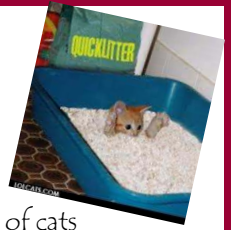
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The Perfect Litterbox continued

look bad or not. Have one more litterbox than the number of cats you have (i.e.: 3 cats = 4 boxes). Don't make your elderly cat climb up and down stairs to get to the litterbox. The majority of cats prefer a clumping litter with a carbon odor absorber in it.

I'm sure when you got your cat, you didn't think there was so much to consider when providing a litterbox. It is best to figure out what your cat prefers early on. They will love you for it and will hopefully keep them from finding a more desirable area in your home.

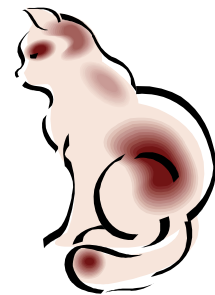


DID YOU KNOW?

- Cats can be clicker trained! This can be especially important when trying to get your cat into the carrier to go for a visit to their friendly doctor. Working with your cat and a "load up" command can make that trip a little bit less stressful. Other useful commands are "off" and "come". Please see me if you are interested in learning how to do this!



- Cats, just like our canine friends, need exercise, too. So get those toys out and play with your cat at least 10-15 minutes each day. Your cat will love you for it, and you may just find them getting into less trouble!!



I'm still looking for article suggestions from you!! Is there anything you ever wondered about or anything your own pets have done that might be useful for other people to learn about.. Don't hesitate to let me know!

Amanda