



# CATS AT HOME



A Healing Paws Veterinary Care Educational Series for Cat Owners

## **-FELINE HOUSE SOILING (A.K.A. INAPPROPRIATE ELIMINATION)-**

When our beloved kitties start to urinate or defecate outside of their litter box, it is an important signal. This signal can be them alerting us to a medical condition, a mental stressor, or even a dissatisfaction with something in their environment. It is of utmost importance that your kitty has a thorough physical examination that includes diagnostics testing (this may be urine testing, fecal testing, blood testing, x rays, ultrasound, or cultures). Cats are secretive creatures and they don't like to tell us when they are hurting or ill. One of the most common signs of dental pain is urination outside of the litter box! They act out by peeing outside of the litter box because the pain in their mouth is stressing them even though they continue to appear to eat normally. Crazy, right?

Once your veterinarian has ruled out any medical causes of feline house soiling, they will work with you to analyze if your kitty may have mental stressors or anxiety issues that require medication and it will be important for you to start to think about their house soiling in a kitty environment way. Although cats urinating in places other than their litter box is often referred to as "inappropriate urination," it's important to remember that cats have been domesticated to live in our houses. Cats in the outdoors urinate in the areas that they chose - clean, safely hidden quiet places in their natural environment. In our houses, we ask them to confine their elimination to a box in an area that we have chosen for them. When they go outside of the litter box, there is a reason they prefer that spot or that they want to avoid their litter box. The urination outside of the litter box is only inappropriate in our eyes, not our cat's eyes. Let's work together so that both we and our cats can agree on what is appropriate! Our tips below will help you make your cat comfortable using the litter box and minimize occurrences of feline house soiling.

### **Litter Types**

- Always choose unscented as scented litter can burn kitties' nose and eyes and make them not want to use them as much. If it smells enough that you can smell it from above or near the box, imagine how strong it is for a sensitive kitty nose right down close.
- Even if you have always used the same brand of litter, litter companies want owners to like the smell of their litter. The scent could have changed and this is newly bothering your cat.



## Litter Types continued

-Recommended Litter Brands: Dr. Elsey's Preferred Cat Attract Unscented Clumping Clay Litter, Yesterday's News Pelleted Litter, Tidy Cats Free and Clean Unscented Clumping Clay Litter, Dr. Elsey's Precious Cat Crystal Silica Unscented Non-Clumping Cat Litter

-Kitties who have sensitive paws, have been declawed, or are seniors often prefer soft surfaces (like shirts and rugs) to use as a bathroom. For them, please consider a soft senior litter such as Dr. Elsey's Senior Cat Litter.

## Litter Boxes

-An important rule to follow is to always have one box per cat plus one additional litter box. This is especially important in multi-cat households where resource guarding can occur (my box-stay away). These boxes should not be together. They need to be in different locations so your kitty can choose where they feel safest.

-Some cats prefer cleanliness and no odor - scoop at least once, but preferably twice, daily and completely empty the box, wash it and replace with new litter once weekly.

-Too deep or too shallow litter is also unpleasant for kitty - please keep litter depth 2-3 inches deep.

-It is important to have both covered and open box choices. Some cats prefer privacy while others want to be able to see all around them to feel safe. Senior cats or those with early arthritis or lameness issues should have a low opening or ramp style litter box.

-When choosing a box, be sure that the box is at least 1.5 times the length of your cat from chest to rump.

-Box recommendations that accommodate senior or mobility issue cats: KittyGoHere Senior Litter Box and Pet Mate Clean Step Litter Dome

-Box recommendations for quite large cats: under-the-bed sweater storage containers without the lid, large plastic concrete mixing tub from a home improvement store

-Make sure the litter box is not in a corner where kitty can feel trapped, it is not in a dark spot where they can't see that they are safe, and make sure it is not right next to their food and water.



## **Cleaning Up Accidents**

How you clean up where your cat soils is incredibly important to reducing recurrence. Pets can smell one drop of urine in a million drops of urine. If your cat smells urine at all, they will likely return to soil again. Also, many cleansers such as vinegar or ammonia can actually make your cat want to urinate in that location to make sure they mark it as a cat spot and not that other smell! You can purchase inexpensive blacklights online to highlight for you where the urine is in the house that needs cleaned. Be sure to look in corners, behind furniture, in closets, and at your cat's tail height along the back of furniture and walls.

### Products that work well:

Nature's Miracle Enzymatic Cleanser /Cat Urine Destroyer, Got Pee Enzymatic Cleanser

## **Additional Ways To Decrease Urinary Inappropriate Elimination**

The more you do, the better your chances of success. Nothing on this handout done on its own will work but when used together many cats and owners find happiness.

-Cat Pheromones: These mimic the smell your cat releases when they rub their chin because they are happy.

Most owners can not smell this. We recommend diffusers as sprays require multiple applications a day.

Brands are important! Feliway or Thunderworks are best.

-You can help draw your kitty to its litter using Cat Attract added to the litter boxes.

-Supplements: Please check with your veterinarian first, but many cats greatly benefit from a supplement that helps them feel more relaxed and less on edge. Please do not use over the counter CBD for your cat without your veterinarian's recommendation. There are dangers in doing so. Supplements that work well are Composure Pro, Solliquin and Zylkene.