



FACTSHEET

Inappropriate Toileting Behaviour

Inappropriate toileting behaviour is when a cat urinates or defecates anywhere other than the litter tray. Urination differs from spraying behaviour as it is when the cat crouches and urinates as they would if using the litter tray.

This behaviour can be shown for a number of reasons including stress, dirty litter tray, unable to get to litter tray or illness. It is very important to first get a vet check if your cat is showing this behaviour to ensure illness is not the cause.

Litter tray problem

Cats are very clean animals and a litter tray that may seem clean to us may be dirty to them. A cat's urine contains ammonia which can often be a lot stronger to your cat as their sense of smell is heightened. As a general rule, you should have a litter tray for each cat in the home plus a spare one. This will help avoid this problem. Try cleaning the tray more frequently and scooping out any faeces as soon as possible. Covered litter trays can often contain the smell and make it even stronger to the cat.

If the tray is clean and your cat isn't using it you may need to try a variety of litters to see which one your cat prefers. Refer to our 'Litter Training' factsheet for more ideas.

If your cat has never had a problem with using the tray before there may be another cause. If you live in a multi-cat household, you need to look at whether your cat is being bullied by one of the other cats when trying to reach the litter box.

Stress related problem

Cats can be easily stressed and even the slightest change in routine may cause stress. Try to work out whether anything has changed in your cat's routine as this may be the trigger for the toileting behaviour. Something as simple as when you feed the cat or what time you get home may cause your cat stress. In these cases, your cat will usually stop displaying the behaviour once a routine has been re-established. In the meantime, you will need to ensure you remove all solid matter from soiled areas and clean the area with a non-bleach product. You should try to use an odour neutralising agent such as Biozet. You can also try using a citrus-based cleaner as most cats do not like citrus and will avoid the area.

You could also try placing another litter tray in the home for a few weeks. You should try to limit access to problem areas until your cat is showing more relaxed behaviours. Never become aggressive to your cat after they have displayed the behaviour as this will only cause your cat to become more stressed. NEVER rub your cat's nose in the area as a cat's nose is very sensitive and you will hurt the cat.

Try to reward the cat with pats and a treat when they use the litter tray as this will reinforce positive behaviour. You could also try a pheromone diffuser or spray such as Feliway in your home, as this will relax your cat and help re-establish your cat's routine faster.

Most importantly, be patient. We have worked with many people who have successfully corrected this behaviour in their cats. Some cats are more easily stressed than others and some breeds are more susceptible to showing this type of behaviour problem. If the problem continues, consult your vet about whether behaviour modifying medication could help your cat.