

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

There are many reasons a cat may prefer not to use its litter box. One common misconception is that cats soil in inappropriate places for revenge. It is tempting to conclude, "He defecated on the living room carpet to punish me for leaving him for the weekend." But this kind of calculation requires sophisticated cognitive abilities that cats aren't believed to possess. Here are just a few reasons cats may soil outside their litter box:

**Medical problems:** The possibility of a medical reason must be ruled out by your veterinarian.

**Litter box aversion:** An aversion implies that there is something about the litter box that your cat finds unsavory.

**Urine marking/territorial anxiety:** Cats use urination as a means of communication with other cats.

Source: Cornell Feline Health Center

## What should I do if my cat soils outside the box?

Odor elimination is important since cats seem to return to the area of previous soiling to soil again. Here are just a few products you can try:

- Nature's Miracle
- Clean + Green
- Outright Stain and Odor Removal Products
- Oxyfresh Pet Deodorizer
- Pheromone Spray

*Ask your veterinarian for more options.*



**Escondido Humane Society**  
3450 E. Valley Parkway  
Escondido, CA 92027  
[www.escondidohumanesociety.org](http://www.escondidohumanesociety.org)

Escondido Humane Society

## When good cats do bad things

### Tips on feline house soiling



Visit us online at  
[www.escondidohumanesociety.org](http://www.escondidohumanesociety.org)  
for more cat resources

The Escondido Humane Society  
Adoption Center is open from  
10 a.m. to 5 p.m. seven days a week.

## **Preventing house soiling**

Despite the cat's reputation for cleanliness, house soiling is the most common behavioral problem reported by cat owners.

### **What NOT to do**

Do not take the cat to the box and move his paws back and forth in the litter. This may actually be a frightening experience to the cat and may cause him to avoid the box. However, if the cat is new to the household, it is a good idea to just let him know where the box is by carrying or leading him over to it using

### **A clean box**

Scoop the box at least daily, preferably as solid waste is deposited. Change clay litter a minimum of every other day; scoopable should be changed weekly. Wash the box with mild soap and water using nothing strong smelling that could cause an aversion to the box.

## **Type of litter**

Most cats prefer small granules, so scoopable is a good choice. Some cats are used to clay. The texture can be important to a cat. Avoid scented litter. Once you find a litter the cat will use, do not switch brands or type.

### **How much litter**

It is NOT true that the more litter you put in the box, the less often you will need to clean the box. Litter that is too deep, not to mention dirty, is likely to cause the cat to avoid the box. Generally, the litter should be no more than 2 inches deep.

### **Location of litter box**

Find a quiet, private place for the litter box. Do not place it next to a noisy appliance or in a high traffic area. In a multi cat household be sure there are two exits from the box to prevent a cat from being trapped by another cat.

## **Number of boxes**

There should be one litter box for every cat, plus one. If the house is large, more than one box may be needed for even a single cat household. Kittens may need several boxes so there is one available when the need arises.

### **Litter box size**

A litter box should be about 1 1/2 times the length of the cat. A litter box for a small dog may work best. If you have a kitten, start with a small box so the kitten can get over the edge. As the kitten grows, increase the size of the box.

### **Covered litter boxes**

You can "test" a covered box. They are good for keeping litter off the floor; however, a large cat may have trouble turning around in a covered box, while some cats like the privacy.