



DORSET STREET ANIMAL HOSPITAL

What is inappropriate elimination? Inappropriate elimination is peeing and pooping outside of the litter box. This can be one of the biggest issues cat owners face. There are four different reasons that will cause cats to have this problem.

1. Environmental and Social Problems : These are the most common reasons for inappropriate elimination. Cats will pee or poop on some other flat surface because they don't like something about the litter box. The main reasons cats dislike their litter box are because it is dirty, they don't like the type of litter, it is in a dark or scary location, or the location is being protected by another cat in the house. Feline Idiopathic Cystitis (FIC) or
2. Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD) : This is a medical problem that creates pain in a cat's bladder, the same feeling a urinary tract infection does, but there is no infection in these cases. Please read our FLUTD handout for more information.
3. Underlying Medical Problems : Cats frequently respond to stress from a medical problem by peeing or pooping out of the litter box. This can be related to problems of the kidneys, thyroid, joints, or belly.
4. Marking or Spraying : This can be a normal behavior for cats, but it generally occurs when a cat is stressed, feels the need to mark its territory, or is not liking the litter box. The cat will lift the tail and pee on a vertical surface like the doorway, where other cats rest, new things in the house, or areas with lots of smells.

Why is my cat doing this? We start by having a long conversation with you about what you are seeing your cat do and what the environment is like at home. Pictures of the litter boxes, maps of the house, videos of how the cats get along or what they are doing when they are pooping and peeing out of the box are very helpful to us. Then we will examine your cat. Based on the exam and what you are seeing at home, we will recommend a combination of tests like looking at a pee sample, blood sample, and xrays.

How can I help my cat? We will first treat any medical problems your cat may have. If we determine that your cat is peeing and pooping out of the litter box due to something in the environment at home, we will talk about the following things to work on solving the problem:

- The Litter Box - there should be at least 1 litter box per cat plus one extra in the house.
 - *Litter*: In general we recommend a clumping, unscented clay litter. While this commonly works for most cats there is quite a variety of textures out there and your cat may prefer (or dislike) one over another. Fill the box with at least 1 inch of litter.
 - *Type of box*: Some cats like a lid, some find a covered box confining or scary.
 - *Location*: Litter boxes should be as appealing as possible and located throughout the house. They should be in quiet, well lit, and easily accessible areas. Avoid putting them in high traffic areas or in isolated areas (ex. attic, basement).

- *Maintenance*: The litter box should be scooped twice daily. The litter should be completely removed once weekly. The box should be cleaned once monthly with warm, soapy water.
- Cleaning : If your cat has peed anywhere in the house outside the litter box, those places need to be thoroughly cleaned so the cat will not be tempted to pee there again. An enzymatic cleaner, like Urine Off, Nature's Miracle, or Anti-Icky Poo should be used to not only remove the odor but also break down the proteins in the pee that humans cannot smell. Carpets should be pulled up so that the floor underneath can be treated. Carpet padding usually needs to be cut out and replaced. Clothing or mats that cats tend to mark should be taken up rather than remain where the cat can get to them. At Home
- Enrichment : Many of our pet cats are now indoor only, which means we need to work hard to provide enrichment and activity in the house that simulates outdoor life. The Ohio State Indoor Pet Initiative is a great resource for enrichment. Visit <https://indoorpet.osu.edu/cats> for more information.
 - Resting and hiding: Cats need vertical spaces to rest and hide. These include cat condos, towers, and boxes.
 - Scratching: Provide multiple scratching posts throughout the house. Many cat towers come with these built in.
 - Interactive toys: Interactive toys can be used with or without food. These toys simulate hunting behavior and are fun to watch your cat play with! Creating a perch or a bird watching area can be fun as well.
 - Outside visualization: If your cat can see other animals outside, usually cats, this can create stress for them. You may need to prevent your pet from being able to see those areas.
- Cat Conflict : Watch carefully for signs of conflict such as stalking, hissing, or staring between cats in your house. There are many resources for evaluating intercat behavior, or a behaviorist can do consultations in the home.
- Pheromone Therapy : Feliway is an odorless pheromone that reduces stress in cats. It can help with both stress in the house and cat conflict. It comes in a diffuser (like a glade plug in) that can spread the pheromone throughout a space in your home.
- Anti-Anxiety Medications : If you have addressed all of the topics above, we may recommend an anti-anxiety medication. These medications can be helpful, but will always need to be given along with careful attention to your cat's environment.