

Feline Inappropriate Elimination is a leading cause of cats being turned over to animal shelters or even euthanized. There are many causes for this problem but there are also numerous solutions.

This pamphlet is designed to present you with some helpful ideas, but it is not all-inclusive.

Share your concerns and questions with us so we can work together to keep you and your cats living together in harmony.

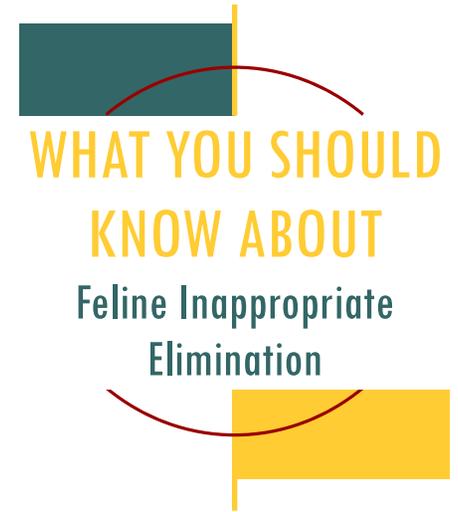



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*Caring for Pets and the
People Who Love Them*

WHAT IS FELINE INAPPROPRIATE ELIMINATION (FIE)?

FIE occurs when a cat either urinates or passes stool in areas of your house other than the litter box. "Inappropriate Elimination" is different from "Urine Marking" or "Spraying" in which a cat defines his/her territory by urinating on it.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

FIE	URINE MARKING
Medical condition or response to stress	Territorial behavior or response to stress
Males affected more than females	Intact cats more than spayed or neutered, males more than females
Urine tends to be on horizontal surfaces (e.g. floor)	Urine tends to be on vertical surfaces (e.g. walls, furniture)
Large or small quantity of urine	Small quantity urine
Responsive to behavioral modification	Less responsive to behavioral modification
Urine or feces	Marking with urine or feces (on substrates associated with owners or other animals (gym shoes, laundry, pillows))

WHY DOES MY CAT GO OUTSIDE THE LITTER BOX?

The first thing we need to rule out is a medical problem!!

- Urinary tract conditions (crystals/stones/bacteria) are painful and will cause your cat to strain when trying to urinate. If your cat experiences discomfort while using the box, he or she will begin to associate the box with pain. Many cats will urinate in different areas, trying to find a spot where it doesn't hurt.
- Other diseases, such as hyperthyroidism and diabetes mellitus, will cause your cat to drink more frequently resulting in a frequent need to urinate. This urge may catch your cat unprepared to make it to the box in time.
- Gastrointestinal problems may result in a sudden urge to defecate. Again, your cat may simply be unable to reach the box quickly enough.
- Bone or joint pain, such as arthritis, can cause your cat to choose not to use the box if it is far away or difficult to reach.



Behavioral Issues

- Any negative incident that occurs near or in the box, such as sudden loud noises (music, dog barking, machinery, oil burner coming on)
- Catching your cat in or near the box in order to give medication
- Multi-cat households in which a dominant cat does not allow another cat access to a shared litter box.
- New animals in your home can create stress; your cat may be afraid to venture out to the box.
- FIE may become a habit. Cats may urinate repeatedly in the same areas.



WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT (OR STOP) INAPPROPRIATE ELIMINATION BY MY CAT?

There may as many causes of FIE as there are cats, but there are some guidelines to help you and your pet.

Remember:

Punishment will not work!!!!!!

Litter boxes: Generally, cats prefer large uncovered boxes. Why? In the wild, cats prefer open fields where they can visibly see and protect themselves from predators. When they are eliminating, they are vulnerable to being attacked. Uncovered boxes allow them to be on the lookout for predators. Large boxes such as clear plastic clothing bins provide room to circle, dig and investigate before they eliminate.

Try to provide **1+ the number of cats** in the home (i.e.- if you have 2 cats, provide 3 litter boxes). Provide at least one box per floor in your house.

Location, location, location: Cats prefer to eliminate in areas that they frequent the most. These are generally quiet areas, but you should pay attention to areas where your cat feels comfortable. For example, if your cat prefers solitude, do **NOT** put the box in areas of high traffic or noisy areas such as a playroom, main bathroom, or next to your noisy washer & dryer.

Substrate (what to put IN the box): There are many types of litter on the market: clay, clumping, silicone beads or crystals, paper products, etc. Just like humans, cats are individuals with preferences. Multiple studies have shown that overall, cats prefer clumping litter, but there are always exceptions.

One way to determine which substrate your cat prefers is to run an experiment: put your cat in an enclosed room

(such as a bathroom) for a few hours along with multiple boxes each containing a different type of litter. This will allow your cat to choose which type of litter he/she prefers. Then stick with this type of litter.

Some cats prefer urinating on hard flat surfaces, in which case an empty litter box may be all they want.

Other cats prefer shreds or strips of newspaper, or wood chips (avoid cedar).



For cats that have made a habit out of urinating on carpet, you might try laying an old piece of washable carpet in the box.

For indoor/outdoor cats with elimination problems, you might consider placing leaves in the box.

Longhaired cats may be predisposed to improper elimination because they tend to collect litter on their coats. Routine brushing may be helpful for these cats.

Litter box liners are not for everyone. Your cat may not like the odor or texture. In that case, do without it.

There is a litter called "Cat Attract" available at pet supply stores. It promises to keep your cat thinking inside the box. It seems to work well for some cats.



Scooping and Cleaning:

If you are using a clumping litter, try to scoop the box at least once daily, and replace litter to maintain a constant depth of at least 3 inches. Discard the entire contents every 2-3 weeks.

Regular clay litter should have fecal matter removed at least once daily. The entire contents should be discarded at least once weekly, more often with multiple cats.

*Hygiene is two thirds of health.
~ Lebanese Proverb*

Clean the litter box with mild soap and hot water. Do not use harsh smelling disinfectants, as the residual odor may be objectionable to your cat. If you can, let it dry outside- Sunshine is an effective germicidal agent!