

## **Litter Box Care to Prevent Problems**

How complicated can it be? You buy a litter box, put the litter in it, and the cat uses it. Right? Not always. Here are some basic guidelines that will help to prevent cats from eliminating outside of their litter boxes.

Litter boxes should be 1.5 times the length of your cat. This means that for many large cats, regular boxes are too small. Any plastic or rubber container with high enough sides can be used for these big cats. If you are using the covered type of litter box, avoid ones with flaps over the cat's entrance. People like these boxes because the flaps help keep odors out of the room, but cats don't like them because the flap keeps the odor inside the box.

The ideal number of litter boxes is the number of cats in your household plus one. If you live in a multi-level home, be sure to place boxes on each level, especially if you have an elderly cat. Don't place litter boxes in busy or noisy areas of the home, and try to ensure that access to the box cannot be blocked by another pet in the home. The litter box should not be associated with negative experiences – don't use it as a trap to catch the cat for its medication or nail trimming.

The litter used is a matter of preference – both yours and ultimately your cat's. There are many types of litter available – pine, wheat or newspaper pellets, clay or crystals. Most cats prefer fine-grained unscented litter such as the clumping variety. Be sure to keep the depth of the litter at least 2 to 3 inches, no matter what type you choose.

The litter box should be scooped every day. If you are using the clumping variety of litter, the box should be emptied, washed, dried and refilled with fresh litter at least once a month. If you are using other forms of litter, this should be done twice a week.

If these recommendations are followed, you should have happy kitties using their litter boxes. If problems do occur, please call us as elimination outside of the litter box can be a sign of various medical conditions.