



Handling Common Cat Behaviour Issues

Hiding and Shyness

Hiding is a normal occurrence for many cats in their new homes. Some cats may spend a few days or even months under beds or in closets. If your cat is very shy you may want to keep them confined to their own room, limiting their access to the entire house, unless you can provide supervision and ensure they can access their litter box, food and water. Offer your cat extra tasty bits of food and talk to them in a gentle voice when they do start to explore. Do not force your new cat out from a hiding spot as it will only make their fears worse and their adjustment harder.

Litter Box Training

For the most part, cats are easy to litter box train. Kittens typically learn this from watching their mothers when they are between 5-8 weeks old, and rarely is the behaviour forgotten. If your cat is having accidents outside of the litter box, a veterinarian should examine them. Most litter box issues are due to medical problems such as urinary tract infections, a painful health risk for your cat. If your veterinarian gives your cat a clean bill of health, you should explore the following factors that may be influencing your cat's behaviour:

Location: Privacy is important. Avoid placing the litter box in high traffic areas. It should be out of the way, yet accessible for daily cleanings.

Litter type: Most cats prefer basic gravel litter. There are a variety of cat litters on the market that vary in price and performance. Veterinarians typically do not recommend clumping kitty litters due to possible blockages in the intestines and breathing distress from cats inhaling or licking the litter off their paws when bathing. If your cat has recently had surgery, your veterinarian may recommend a paper based litter to prevent wounds from becoming infected.

Litter boxes: Litter boxes can be covered or open, and cats may feel more comfortable in one or the other. Changing to a litter box with a cover,

or providing a litter pan with a lower height for easier entries and exits usually easily fixes accidents that are found just outside of an open litter box.

Keep it clean: Your cat's litter box should be given a quick scoop on a daily basis to remove any waste. Cats are very tidy animals, and many will not use a dirty litter box.

Multiple cats, multiple boxes: Some cats will share a litter box while others will not. If the number of cats in your household is greater than the number of litter boxes, multiple daily cleanings will help ensure success and reduce odours.

Changes: Any change to location, litter type or the box itself may cause an issue for your cat. Changes should be made slowly and one at a time to easily identify any problems.

Destructive Scratching

While some cats are more intense at scratching than others, all cats instinctively need to scratch. Your new cat should be provided with a designated spot and item to scratch. The most popular solutions for scratching are scratch boxes, scratch posts and scratch hangers. More elaborate "kitty trees" or "kitty condos" can be constructed or purchased as well.

In order to scratch, cats look for an easily visible, soft surface, deep enough for their claws to sink into, but soft enough that it shreds or seems to shred. Most cats like to scratch items that have a carpeted or rope surface, or are made with corrugated cardboard or wood.

There are scratching products available from pet supply stores range from small carpet hangers that can be hung on a door knob for cats who enjoy vertical scratching to flat cardboard floor boxes that most cats find hard to resist. For more information about training your cat to use a scratching product and tips for preventing your cat from scratching furniture or other items, see the *Declawing: Take Your Cat's Side* brochure.