

Litter Box Options

What is the best bathroom for your cat?

Can you picture the differences between a Porta-Potty and a deluxe master bath? What about a very busy public bathroom versus a quiet and clean smelling personal bathroom?



VS



VS



Surprisingly cats also prefer a quiet, clean, and spacious “bathroom.” The most frequent complaint that I hear as a veterinarian from clients who own young adult cats is the sudden realization that their pet is no longer being faithful to the litter box. Sometimes the cats are obvious about their lapses – urinating on rugs, personal possessions, or directly in front of the owner. Other times it is the owner’s nose that alerts them when cats are more indirect with their message.

Being a cat owner myself, I know the first instinct when making such a discovery is to yell at the perpetrator. This however solves nothing. Truly the first step is to contact your veterinarian and have a urine sample analyzed for signs of infection, inflammation or crystals. Please give your cat the benefit of the doubt – there really may be a physical problem.

Once any physical problems have been eliminated or “ruled-out,” reassessing the cat’s “bathroom” is the next step. There are several things to consider as to why your feline friend may have lost his litter box affinity.

- 1) The litter box should be kept in a quiet and private location; but not too remote from main social area. Cats do not like to be disturbed or stalked by other pets or humans when in the box. Sudden noises can also be a deterrent so avoid placing box next to furnaces or other machines that “start-up” unexpectedly.
- 2) Clean the box daily. In a public bathroom, if a toilet hasn’t been flushed, do you use that one or find a clean stall? Avoid your cat from making the same choice by keeping the litter box scooped out.
- 3) Find a cat litter that forms solid clumps, controls urine and fecal odors (without being scented), low dust level and not abrasive to sensitive cat feet. Once you find the litter brand that your cat likes, don’t change it suddenly.

- 4) Some cats prefer to urinate and defecate in separate boxes. So plan for a litter box for each cat plus one and have a box accessible on every floor of the house that the cat frequents.
- 5) For large cats, geriatric cats, young kittens, or those who are generally messy in their “bathroom,” using a large storage tub works well. An entrance can be cut out of one side to allow easier access. In general the box length should be 1.5 times the length of the cat.



If you have followed these 5 basic steps and your feline friend is still not faithfully using the litter box, contact a veterinarian or clinic with behavior experience, Cats International, Feline Fine Again, or Healing Touch for Animals for additional help. The vast majority of cases can be solved – so don't give up on your pet too easily.