



TOILETTING challenges - These information sheets are just to help with ideas. They are not written by vets. Any sick cat needs to be taken to a vet.

Cats are notoriously clean creatures, so when not using a litter tray - it could well be a cat who is trying to tell you he is unhappy/sick and it is your job to interpret what he is saying.

Some changes to a cat's home can make them very unhappy and toilet issues may be just one of the ways they can tell you that. We do get some cats brought to us as they start issues when a baby arrives or a dog is adopted, etc. They were fine before this change happened and on rehome away from that trigger, they can go back to 100% litter tray use. What has changed in your home?

My Bertie periodically wees in corners or not in litter trays, he does it when he is ill or when he is very stressed (usually caused by us humans not considering HIS feelings – like when we keep an elderly end of life cat and integrate it too quickly, etc.). He doesn't do it to upset me, he does it to tell me that I need to help him. By adopting him from a rescue, he is my responsibility and his life and his pain/upset is in my hands.

Someone told me something very funny the other day. A pet behaviourist said there are 10 reasons a cat may not use its litter tray, the 11th reason is that they are just a Persian!

Should I worry with toilet issues?

Yes, the cat may be in agony with cystitis or blocked (more common in male cats) or bowels may be impacted.

If your cat is making frequent trips to the litter tray but only producing small amounts of urine then he/she could have cystitis or struvite crystals and if you have a male cat then your trip to the vet needs to be at double time because crystals can



block a male urethra very quickly, causing death.

In my own experience of cats with litter issues, the vast majority was caused by bladder infections and they were trying to tell me of their pain. As soon as that was sorted out, they went straight back to their tray.

The majority of the time with a medical issue causing cystitis/bowel issues, this can be sorted out with some medication and a possible change of diet may help (wet food or good quality dry, some additions to the food/medication. Using cheap dry food is a false economy. Someone gave me a huge bag of cheap dry food about 15 years ago and I switched all my pedigree rescue cats to it and I ended up with £500 vet bill with 2 cats with cystitis around Xmas (with emergency appts).



I had a very young male Persian die, after he started with a bout of cystitis due to crystals and we started on med and special food, but he blocked again, he was rushed to remove blockage and they sewed in a catheter and after a stay at vet and recovery, we then took him home as advised and took half days off work so he was not home on his long for too long a time, but it blocked again and despite rushing to the vet, this time they couldn't not unblock the urethra or even create a solution which may have left him incontinent and his whole body started shutting down. He was only 18 months old and we were heartbroken. We now don't even wait an hour when we see a cat straining, we take it straight to a vet. If you mention possible blockage, we have found any vet will fit you as an emergency. After that huge vet bill, I started insuring all my cats.

Which was lucky as the next issue I had with a male cat and toilet issues was one with stones forming and one blocked his urethra. He was saved and he never had issues ever again with his bladder, as we fed him the recommended food.

If your cat is defecating outside the tray then the same principle applies - is your cat in pain? Is it constipated? Has it had a bowel problem recently and is associating the litter tray with a painful experience?

Sometimes, even after your cat has recovered from a bladder or bowel problem they still try to avoid using their litter tray. If this is happening to you there is a wonderful type of litter called Litter Attract which you can get from Amazon and I can vouch for its effectiveness.

Can a cat with toilet- challenges be re trained?

Yes, cats can be retrained where it is behaviour related. It can for some mean a different environment is needed or adopter needs to layout litter etc as suited that pussycat.

We do see some cats, mainly Persians surrendered to us with litter issues as the reason.

The cat who took us longest was a cuddly adoring lovebug of a Persian. We had to work with him for about 3 months. He was a wonderful boy, but a bit like Winnie the Pooh and had little brain. He had been weeing everywhere – worktops, beds, on everything. He just needed reminding a lot and once rehomed, we supported his new mom to keep up his training. He is still happy in that home maybe 20 months on now.

Some cats can become incontinent due to a medical issue which cannot be resolved, but many issues can be. Bagel had been incontinent for 3 years but once his bad kidney and bladder infection was cleared, he uses his litter tray ever time. His wee was full of blood on arrival.

For my Bertie (a Persian), when he is stressed he does it and lies in it to reassure himself. He also suffers with bladder crystals and that irritates his bladder and so he is straining and could block, so wees a small amount all the time.

We have had more oriental/Siamese cats who spray, but we did manage to sort out Winston, who has been clean since rehomed after training.

Number of trays to buy

Do you have enough litter trays? Feline behaviourists agree that the magic number is one tray per cat plus one extra. That can be an awful lot of trays (one of our team would need 8!) and realistically not everyone may have space for that many and your cats may toilet outdoors most of the time, but if you want a multi cat household then it is ultimately your responsibility to provide adequate facilities for your cats so start with plenty of trays and you might find you can make gradual subtractions. If things get messy, start adding the trays again until you reach the number your cats are happy with.

We have 7 for our 5 indoor only cats, as we have a cat who is rather lazy and so we need to have one near most places he likes to spend his time! So we by trial and error found placings that work!

If you want to adopt from Strawberry, even if a cat has some garden access, you must be prepared to have a litter tray, as in bad weather, a cat needs an indoor option. Some cats go outside but still use their litter tray indoors.



Urine or poo next to litter tray, where cat is happy to step into tray

I find pedigree cats are not always the brightest, they can think that some legs in a cat litter tray is enough to ensure the for toileting goes inside it too! Sometimes a hooded tray help with this problem. We have found some girl and boys cats wee stood up – so it can go horizontally onto walls and things behind the tray – again the hooded tray can help this.

Here are some more hints -

Do you have enough litter trays? Feline behaviourists agree that the magic number is one tray per cat plus one extra. Some cats - particularly long haired - simply refuse to use the

same tray for both "functions". They get into the tray for a pee, the litter gets wet and then they object to getting back in the tray for a poo because the wet litter sticks to their fur which they then have to lick off - yuk! Solution - extra tray.

Are you using scented cat litter? Not popular with most cats as they really object to licking off something which tastes of perfume off their paws. What smells nice to you, may not taste nice to them.

Is the litter too harsh on their paws? Some cats object to the large grit type litter and would prefer to use a much finer sand type. Why not try a variety of litters in different trays and see which one your cat prefers? You might also consider trying both hooded and open trays and see which is more acceptable to your cat.



Are you keeping the tray(s) clean enough? Of course you think you are, but does your cat feel the same way? If you are using ordinary litter as opposed to clumping litter then the bottom of the tray can become quite wet - totally unacceptable to a fastidious feline. Not only that, an accumulation of urine can cause nasty burns on their paws.

Where are the trays located? Food and water need to be a reasonable distance away. If the trays are in your kitchen/utility room then perhaps they are too close to noisy washing machines or tumble dryers. If the trays are by a glass door leading to the outside then this can make some cats feel quite vulnerable and uneasy as they worry they could be pounced on by an interloper. This is particularly true if your cat is elderly and/or disabled. Move the trays to a more secluded location or block off the bottom of the glass door.

Do you have a multi cat household? If you do then you could well have one cat who is trying to exercise his authority by guarding the litter trays. Cats can be incredibly sneaky and you might not even notice it is happening. Place trays in different locations so it is impossible for one cat to guard them all at the same time and try not to position them in narrow spaces which might restrict your cat's ability to gain access to them if he has to run the gauntlet of the cat on litter tray guard.

If an accident happens on your carpet or soft furnishings then clean it with a solution of biological washing liquid and allow it to dry thoroughly before allowing the cat back to the location so that the enzymes have time to work and neutralise the smell. Don't be tempted to use anything perfumed to cover up the smell as this can simply attract the cat back to the same place. We have used products from Amazon (like WEE AWAY) to remove the lingering smell of cat urine, as else it can encourage them or others to use that area! Don't use ones with ammonia in - it will encourage not discourage accidents.

