

# ANIMAL HOSPITAL OF LANESVILLE

1849 Highway 11 Lanesville, IN 47136 (812) 952-3643

## For the Cat that Won't Use the Litter Box

By Dr. Rene Wingerter

The number one problem of cats reported to behavioral specialists is "Litter Box Aversion," or in other words, "the cat doesn't always use the litter box."

When we say the cat "won't use the litter box", that implies that the cat is knowingly and maliciously urinating and defecating on our carpets and beds out of plain old meanness. However, nothing could be farther from the truth. The fact is, the cat is trying to ask you for help, and you need to find out what the problem is.

It is important to know if your cat is Urine Spraying. This is most often done by un-altered males and neutering is the only cure. The cat stands and urinates, usually on a wall or other vertical object.

But no matter what, you should have your checked out by a Veterinarian. One of the most common medical problems is painful urination or defecation caused by **infections or dietary problems**. Once these are corrected, the cat will usually go back to the litter box without you having to do anything else. If your cat does not use the litter box and you have not taken him to the vet, you are doing him a major injustice.

If your vet tells you that your kitty is fine, now the fun begins. If your cat does not use the litter box now, it is most likely because he **does not like the litter, the box, or the location**. You will need to try at least three different types of litter boxes (covered ones, deep ones, shallow ones) and try three types of litter (without perfume, clay, clumping) and put these in three different types of locations (secluded, out in the open, close to where he prefers to go). It also helps to put different amounts of litter in the boxes, some three inches deep or more, some almost empty. You might also try putting a little potting soil in the litter if your cat likes to use the outdoors or your plants. You will also need to keep the litter boxes scrupulously clean.

If you have moved to a new location, have a new member in your family, or have just bought new furniture, realize that your cat is under stress and it may take awhile for him to adjust. **Stress** can be

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a major reason cats forget their litter box training. Just keep things as quiet and normal as possible and let him know you love him.

As a last resort, there are some behavior modification drugs that can be tried, but these can cause their own set of problems, so use with caution.

Remember, don't blame the cat. Find out what he is upset about and correct it.

If you have any further questions or your pet needs an exam, please call the Animal Hospital of Lanesville at 952-3643. 🌐