



## Soiling Problems in Cats: Litter –box avoidance



There are many causes of inappropriate elimination, including a highly significant rate of medical undertones. It is essential for the cat to have a full medical work up prior to any behaviour therapy.

In cases of litter box avoidance it is likely that the deposit of urine outside of the box is significantly large in volume, which indicates that the cat is emptying his bladder. It is more likely to be seen on horizontal surfaces rather than vertical surfaces, which indicate that it is not sprayed. However, one would similarly expect to see deposits of faecal matter as the cat is attempting to avoid using the litter tray for all forms of elimination.

Household routines generally may affect how a cat uses its litter tray. For example, changes can be stressful and may precipitate house soiling. Equally, the location of the litterbox plays a significant role in the initial onset of the litter-box avoidance, due to its close proximity to an ongoing area of change and instability and its close proximity to the sleeping station

**Substrate (litter) preference:** Preferences for substrates to evacuate the bladder/bowels have been studied in cats. A study of several different types of litters showed that most cats prefer unscented, finely particulate litter materials as is typical of the clumping type litters over other litter options. Large particulate matter is generally not preferred for an elimination substrate for cats. Cats with elimination problems are more likely to be offered a scented litter than cats without elimination problems, suggesting that the scent may contribute to the development of elimination problems.

The cleanliness of the box and maintenance routine is often suggested as a factor contributing the cat refusing to use the litter tray. However, in a litter depth study there was anecdotal evidence to suggest that cats used the same litterbox for urination and defecation although an alternative clean box was available.

Please contact WellBehave if you have any further questions regarding litterbox avoidance.