

Litter Box Setup for Success

Cats naturally view the world as their litter box. Outdoor cats use anything from a bush to the side of a tree as a restroom. So, it is *remarkable* that pet cats have adapted to use a small box. Some cats find this more difficult than others, so we must set them up for success.

- **Number**

The golden rule of litter boxes is that you need one litter box per cat *plus one*- minimum. So, if you have one cat, you need two litter boxes. Two cats? Three boxes. Cats do not like to urinate and defecate in the same space, so they need separate boxes for each function. The more cats you have, the more boxes you'll need to avoid tension.

- **Size**

Cats need sizeable litter boxes to feel comfortable. If your cat has to contort, bend, or perch to relieve him/herself, the litter box is too small. Litter boxes should be at least 1 ½ times the length of the cat. Under-bed storage containers are great litter box alternatives.

- **Litter**

Especially if you have a declawed cat, litter can be too rough and hurtful on the paws. Dusty or fragrant litters can also repel cats. Softer, unscented clumping litter tends to be the best option, as the general preference. If you switch litter substrates, do so gradually or the abrupt change can cause a decline or complete stop to litter box usage.

- **Depth**

Litter depth can also be a factor in your cat's litter box reliability. Cats neither like too much nor too little litter. The typical rule of thumb to litter depth is two inches.

- **Location**

Litter box usage is all about location. Litter boxes are often placed in basements or laundry rooms where visitors won't see them. But if litter boxes are hard to access or next to a noisy drier, chances are the box will go untouched. Litter boxes should be spaced out, with one on each floor of your house, to provide options. Lastly, do not place litter boxes near food, water, or beds. Cats don't like to relieve themselves where they eat any more than we do!

- **Tops and Bottoms**

Litter boxes are best left uncovered. While we may not like the sight of the box, covers do more harm than good. Covered litter boxes create an outhouse effect for your cat, making it an unpleasant option that they would rather avoid. Like covers, litter box liners are a human convenience that create more problems than they solve. Liners catch on claws, causing discomfort often leading to litter box avoidance altogether. Liners can also build up static electricity as your cats bury their deposits, literally shocking them out of the box.

- **Keep it Clean!**

Litter boxes **MUST** be cleaned EVERY DAY. This cannot be overstated. Deep cleaning the box is as simple as using warm, soapy water and replacing the litter once a week.

If you have any issues with your cat not using the litter box- or any other behavioral issue- contact the HAWS Behavior Department at (262)542-8852 ext. 204. HAWS offers complementary behavior consultations for the life of your HAWS adoptee. We are here to help!