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What to Do When Your Cat Decides Not to Use the Litter Box

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The most common behavioral problem seen in felines is urine marking and inappropriate elimination. Urine marking, often called spraying, occurs when a cat backs up to a vertical surface and deposits a small amount of urine. Marking usually occurs at socially significant areas. Cats most commonly “spray” to mark their territory, signal sexual readiness, or in reaction to stress such as a new pet in the home.

A cat exhibiting inappropriate urination will usually empty its entire bladder on a horizontal surface other than the litter box. Inappropriate urination can occur for a variety of reasons. Possible causes are urinary tract infection, anxiety, litter box aversion or a preference for a new location and/or material on which to eliminate. The first step to treat or prevent urine marking behavior is **SPAYING OR NEUTERING THE CAT**. This is extremely effective in eliminating urine marking behavior. If the pet is already spayed or neutered, the next step is to rule out medical problems such as a urinary infection. It may be necessary for the veterinarian to obtain a urine sample from your pet to determine if the pet has a UTI. If no medical explanation can be found, then discuss your cat's behavior with your veterinarian. In some cases, the marking behavior can be corrected by using a product called **FELIWAY**. This product contains facial pheromones and may inhibit urine marking when applied to an area.

Some cats do not like the litter box, litter, or may have had some traumatic experience in the litter box, such as another pet annoying them or some noise or incident which may have frightened the pet.

In multiple cat households you may need several litter boxes; typically the suggested number is one per cat plus one. If the litter is scented, the pet may not use it. If you suspect this, then try plain clay litter or play sand. If an anxiety may be causing the pet to urinate outside the box, an anti-anxiety medication may help to correct the problem.

Remember to consult your veterinarian if your pet is not using the litter box. If you would like more information about this problem, please contact Llisa Spencer at 315-986-4246.