



## Guide to Litter Boxes and Feline House Soiling

There are many reasons a cat may not use the litter box. There are also many things you can do to alleviate this issue. Your cat will have better success in your home than anywhere else, so please try these tips before considering relinquishing your animal.

**The most common reason cats stop using the litter box is MEDICAL.** If your cat has stopped using the litter box, especially if they used it previously, take them to the vet! Your veterinarian will be able to rule out any medical issues that may be contributing to the avoidance of the litter box.

*If your cat has been cleared medically and still does not use the litter box, follow these tips:*

1. Ensure there are enough litter boxes in the home.
  - a. A good rule of thumb is: one litter box per cat plus one.
  - b. There should be at least one litter box on each level of the home.
2. Ensure the litter boxes are being cleaned on a regular basis. Many cats do like to use a dirty bathroom.
  - a. Litter should be scooped **daily**.
  - b. The entire box of litter should be changed at least once a month.
3. Ensure the box is big enough.
  - a. Typically, the bigger the box, the better. The litter should be deep enough that your cat can dig without hitting the bottom.
4. Find your cat's preferences.
  - a. Some cats prefer different types of litter over others. Try a variety to see which type your cat likes the best.
  - b. Some cats prefer either covered or uncovered boxes.
  - c. Some cats prefer more privacy than others. Try placing a box that is out of the way or even hidden behind some type of barrier.
  - d. Try placing litter boxes in quiet places in the home, away from washing machines, etc.
5. **Environmental stress** can also cause cats to not use their litter box. If your cat is constantly hiding or lives in fear from another cat or dog in the home, try to make them feel safer.
  - a. Provide your cat plenty of escape routes.
  - b. Provide your cat with vertical space. This can be done using cat trees, shelves, or anything else that allows the cat to be up high.
  - c. Be sure your cat is able to feel socially significant in the home. They should not be forced to hide away in order to feel safe. Give them a place where they can see what is going on without having to be a part of it.

If you have tried what is provided here and still have questions, contact [larimerbehaviorhelp@nocohumane.org](mailto:larimerbehaviorhelp@nocohumane.org) or call 970-226-3647 ext. 5130