

Inappropriate elimination:

Inappropriate elimination can be caused by medical problems, marking behavior, or toileting behavior problems. Discerning which of these is the cause can help direct the therapy. Medical problems, such as lower urinary tract disorders or diseases causing increased drinking and urination should be ruled out first. Marking behavior is most often related to aggression, territorial issues, or anxiety, whereas toileting behavior (elimination in a spot other than the litter box) is often related to medical problems, anxiety, preference issues or aversions. These distinctions are not absolute, and some cross-over exists. Some marking behavior can have a medical basis.

Discriminating between marking behavior and toileting behavior involves identifying various clues: e.g. squatting to urinate (toileting) vs. vertical spraying (marking); small (marking) vs. large (toileting) volumes of urine.

If the cat is defecating or urinating immediately outside the box you should consider litter preference issues, or litter box hygiene. Cats are fairly fastidious, and do not enjoy urinating or defecating in dirty environments.

Things to consider with this situation are:

- (A) Change the litter more frequently, to keep it cleaner
- (B) Consider a different type of litter - some cats do not like to walk or squat on certain types of litter.
- (C) Consider the size of the litter box - a box that is too small may make it difficult for a cat to assume the correct posture for easy voiding. Additionally, old arthritic cats may have difficulty getting in and out of a litter box - consider ramps or steps into and out of the box.
- (D) Consider the number of litter-boxes, and their locations around the house. Cats are private animals, so often a "protected" litter-box will be used whereas a litter-box in an open area will be avoided. There should be one litter box per cat plus one extra.
- (E) If the problem appears to be urine spraying, rather than toileting behavior, inter-cat aggression issues in multi-cat households should be investigated. Similarly, aggression toward neighborhood cats that are "encroaching" on the affected cat's territory (e.g. seen through a window etc) may cause marking behavior.

Behavior-modifying drugs have recently become commonly prescribed for elimination behaviors in cats (as well as for many other behavior issues). However, drugs are generally indicated only for those pets with anxiety or conflict induced marking behavior as they will have little or no impact on the cat that is soiling in inappropriate areas. Several studies have looked at the effects of these drugs on marking behavior, as well as side effects, long-term effects, drug disposition and dosing.

Feliway is a pheromone that has been used in many cases to discourage marking.