



Westerly Animal Shelter

33 Larry Hirsch Lane • Westerly, Rhode Island 02891

TEL: (401) 584-7941 · FAX: (401) 584-7940

History of Litter Box Issues

Copyright Denver Dumb Friends League and Humane Society of the United States. All rights reserved.

What does this mean?

The cat has a history of urinating or defecating outside the litter box. This behavior could be inconsistent meaning it happens once in a while or it could be consistent where it happens regularly.

What causes this type of behavior?

This behavior is a normal behavior cats can display that happens for one of two reasons and sometimes a combination. One reason is the cat has a medical issue such as a Urinary Tract Infection. The second reason is the cat was/is under a higher level of anxiety.

What can you do?

First recommendation for any animal with a behavior that is concerning is to take the cat to your veterinarian. All cats adopted from the Westerly Animal Shelter have been evaluated by veterinarian staff to verify no medical cause. If the veterinarian clears the cat from any medical concerns then you need to look at the environment the cat is living in daily.

How to change the behavior?

Many cats that have a history of not using the litter box consistently just need a change of environment. Moving a cat from one family to another, in some cases, is all it takes to change this behavior. Although this is a normal behavior, for most cats this behavior is something that can be reduced or resolved through anxiety relief.

Recommendations to resolve anxiety: The goal for a home environment is first to provide what the cat needs (handouts on our website www.ddfl.org "Preventing Litter box Issues" and "Solving Litter box Issues") and then enrich the environment in similar ways we enrich our own lives. Cats thrive off of routine but within that routine it is beneficial if they receive physical exercise and mental stimulation. We can provide the

cats mental needs through "Play Therapy" (also called structured play) and "Clicker Training". These two activities are covered in our handouts "Playing with Your Cat" and "Clicker Training for Cat".

Why does this work?

If we provide the correct environment for cats then they will not display any concerning behaviors. By providing the correct number and cleanliness of litter boxes, mental stimulation, physical exercise and doing proper introductions to other animals (handouts on our website "Introducing Your Cat to Other Pets" or "Introducing Your Cat to Your Resident Cat") you will not be causing any anxiety, which causes behavior issues.