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# Dealing With Litterbox Problems in Cats

White Mountain Bengals

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Is your cat peeing or pooping outside the litterbox? **DO NOT PANIC!** First step is to place your cat in a bathroom or multilevel cat cage with a clean litterbox, food, and water. Right now, go do it, then come back and read the rest!

So now that your cat is properly confined (and likely is annoyed by it), let's talk about how to resolve this issue.

**Step 1:** Keep kitty confined in the smaller area for 2 weeks. Visit kitty often and play with kitty to ensure they do not get stir crazy! If an accident happens within the two weeks, start count from the day of that accident until you go two weeks without an accident, then move to **Step 2**.

**Step 2:** Move kitty to a slightly larger sized area (IE, bathroom if you're using a cage, larger room (bedroom) if you're using a bathroom). Again, wait out the two weeks. This time, if kitty has an accident, move back to the smaller space for 1 week no accidents, then back to **Step 2**.

**Step 3:** YAY Kitty was good in the bedroom/larger area, now move kitty to an even larger area or a whole floor of the house, another two weeks.

Keep following these steps until your kitty has free reign of the house again and does not have accidents. Move kitty back one step if they have an accident in bigger surroundings.

## **WHAT TO DO WHILE KITTY IS IN RE-TRAINING MODE**

**1-** Clean all of the areas kitty has soiled with proper enzyme cleaner like Natures Miracle. Animals can smell urine better than we can, and kitty will keep coming back to the same spot and soiling it again if it is not properly cleaned.

**2-** Ensure kitty is not having any medical issues. Cats that are suffering a UTI will have pain when they urinate and associate this pain with their litterbox. This also goes for defecation (constipation/etc). I have seen UTI's misdiagnosed (false negative) and a round of Doxycycline eliminated the issue of urinating outside the litterbox.

**3-** Ensure that you have 1 litterbox per cat PLUS one extra AND one per floor of your home. (IE 2 cats = 3 litterboxes, 3 cats = 4 litterboxes).

**4-** Ensure you do not have other cats, dogs, or children pestering kitty when they are using the box. If the box is in a place where your kitty does not feel safe using it, or where they are pestered by children and/or other animals, they will not want to use their box.

**5-** Ensure proper litterbox placement. If you hide your cats' litterbox behind things, or they are placed in the bathroom and kitty has nowhere else to go when a human companion is using the bathroom, they will just find another place. Hidden litterboxes are inconvenient for your cat and they don't always want to go out of the way to find/go to their box. If it's extra work, why do it? Right?

**6-** Did you change your kitty's litter lately? Maybe a new formula? Different scent? Try multiple boxes with different litters and see if this helps.

**7-** Are you feeding any wet food? Cats that are not fed wet food do not receive as much moisture in their diet as their raw/can fed counterparts. Cats do not naturally drink enough water, which can cause kidney issues and UTI's. A water fountain can help increase fluid intake (they are more attracted to drinking the moving water), and at least supplementing with canned food once a day will keep your cat healthier.

**8- \*\*\*STRESS\*\*\*** Stress is one of the biggest causes of improper urination/defecation (more commonly urination).

Did you just get a new pet? - Did you just travel and come back? - Did you just bring kitty to the vet, boarding, a show, etc? - New child/new visitor?

A recommendation for this is to get stress relief plug-ins and use them during the re-training as well as after, inside your home. If you recently got a new pet, extra cat trees can also help with this, and additional litterboxes in safe places.

**9-** Is your cat fixed? Or is there another unfixed cat around outside?

Male and female cats will spray to mark territory. I have seen a female cat spray almost 1 full cup of urine on a wall (my wall) after I was done cleaning. Males even neutered may spray if there is an unneutered male cat nearby. There was once a case where an unneutered male cat was spraying outside of a homeowner's door. Their indoor neutered male then decided to start spraying the inside of the door, in an attempt, we guess, to mark their territory.

**10-** Was your cat declawed? This could also be the cause of poor litterbox habits. Have the declaw sites checked for any issues, and then, using this technique, use a litter soft on the paws.

So, while there are lots of reasons why your cat might have stopped using the litterbox, don't give up on them. With this technique, some time, patience, and maybe a few changes or vet treatment, your cat should go back to being a well-behaved part of your family.