

Accidents Happen

You've figured out why your cat missed the box. Now how do you get the stain out of the carpet?

Peggy Scott

Should your kitty score a direct hit on the carpet, it's not the end of the world. Despite the rather distinct staying power of cat urine, there are ways to clean the spot and, more important, break the cycle of repeat accidents. Our experts offer their tips.

"This is where you get to play detective," says Pam Johnson-Bennett, a feline behaviorist. "Any number of enzymatic cleaners can treat the spot, but if you don't find the cause, you're going to have to clean again."

"Enzymatic cleaners work best," says Myrna Milani, DVM, an animal behaviorist who works from the Westminster Animal Hospital in Westminster, Vt. Some of her clients have reported success with such products as Nature's Miracle and Anti-Icky-Poo.

Wayne Hunthausen, DVM, director of Animal Behavior Consultations at the Westwood Animal Hospital in Westwood, Kan., agrees that finding and treating the cause are as important, if not more so, than treating the symptom. But first, you've got to get the odor out. Dr. Hunthausen also suggests moving food and water bowls or the cat's bed to the area your cat soiled because a cat doesn't like to eliminate in the place where it sleeps or eats.

To discourage a repeat performance, you may also want to try an aversion technique, Dr. Hunthausen says. Motion detector alarms deter cats by emitting a noise when it walks by the area, and the smell of mothballs or citrusy items also repel cats.

Hunthausen is quick to note, however, that some of these techniques may not be suitable if you're dealing with a particularly shy or skittish cat or a new addition that may just be trying to settle into the household.

John Prange, DVM, a veterinary consultant for LitterMaid, recommends mopping up the spot as quickly as possible and using an odor-neutralizing product. After treating the spot, cover the area with plastic wrap to allow the products to penetrate. Then place foil or wax paper over the area to keep kitty away; cats don't like the crinkly feel underfoot.