

My Cat Is Urinating Outside the Box

CatChannel veterinary expert Arnold Plotnick, DVM, discusses some ways to make litterbox more appealing.

By Arnold Plotnick, DVM

Posted: Feb. 6, 2009, 3 a.m. EST

Q: My cat Fluffy is 15 years old and has been diagnosed with chronic kidney disease. Lately she has been urinating outside her box, on the same spot on a tile floor in a small laundry room. Is there anything at all I can do?

A: Whenever a cat urinates in a place other than the litterbox, we need to make sure that there's no medical problem going on before we call this a behavioral problem.

Your cat has chronic renal failure, which can cause cats to urinate more than normal, but that alone doesn't usually cause them to urinate outside their litterbox, unless the box isn't being cleaned regularly and is so overrun with urine that the cat chooses to urinate elsewhere. Cats with chronic kidney disease are susceptible to getting urinary tract infections, and this can cause cats to urinate in inappropriate places.

The fact that your cat is urinating on the same spot on a tile floor makes me think that this is a behavioral problem. Your cat either doesn't like her litterbox, or likes this new spot more than her litterbox, or both. You need to make the litterbox more appealing and make the spot on the tile floor less appealing. To make the box more appealing, add a second box to the household. The new litterbox should be in a quiet, low-traffic area and be uncovered (no hood). Clumping litter should be used (cats prefer it), and the feces and urine clumps should be removed once or even twice daily.

To make the spot she's going on less appealing, you can apply sheets of double-sided sticky tape (like Sticky Paws) on the surface. If necessary, you can put a food dish on that area. Cats won't urinate where the food bowl is. The first thing that you should do, however, is take your cat to the vet and make sure that this isn't a medical problem. A urinalysis and urine culture should be performed.