

# My cat has started spraying / my cat has stopped using the litterbox regularly (or at all) - what can I do?

1. ALWAYS take your cat to the vet to check for a possible medical reason for the change in behavior.
2. It is essential that male/female cats are neutered/spayed!
  - Un-neutered males are more territorial and spray more than females to mark and establish their dominance in a household. Other benefits of neutering are:
    - Neutering minimizes the risks of getting testicular and prostate cancers, calms them down, and makes them less likely to want to fight with other cats or go outside to roam (which is NOT a good idea in any case).
    - Cats allowed outdoors face many dangers: exposure to diseases from feral cats who are not vaccinated; fighting with other cats or raccoons; being attacked and killed by coyotes; being run over by cars; being harmed by people in the area who do not like cats and want them off their property and away from their bird feeders; and un-neutered male cats allowed outdoors can and will impregnate unspayed female cats who are either feral or pets allowed outdoors; thus contributing to the pet overpopulation and suffering tragedy in our nation.
    - All of the above is equally applicable to female cats (except they don't usually spray like males do). Female cats can become pregnant multiple times a year so it is CRUCIAL that you do not allow your cat(s) to contribute to pet overpopulation!
3. You must ask yourself if there have been any major changes in your household that could have caused the cat to become stressed such as a new cat or dog or a baby, and the cat feels like it is not getting enough attention. Cats are very sensitive and they can even sense when there is someone in the household who doesn't like them.
4. Do you keep the litterbox (boxes) clean all the time? Owners who allow litterboxes to become very dirty are asking for trouble since cats are generally very clean animals who groom/clean themselves regularly and do not like to use dirty letterboxes. There must be at least one litterbox per cat in any household as well, and they should be cleaned at the very least twice a day if not three times.
5. Ask your vet about giving your cat valium (vet scribed – not something from your medicine closet). It could help calm them down and get them to stop spraying/not using litterbox. You can also buy FELI-WAY plug-ins at pet stores which has a calming effect on most cats.
6. Finally there are vet specialists in the Detroit Metro Area who are highly regarded for their treatment of this problem in cats:
  - **Dr. Chris Platz**, 15310 Mack Ave. Grosse Pointe Park, MI 48236; 313-886-0300 for his unique hormone treatments that have gotten many, many cats to stop spraying and to resume using their letterboxes.
  - **Dr. DePorter**, who is a veterinarian that specializes in cat behavior and is excellent. She works out of Oakland Veterinary Referral Services in Bloomfield Hills and can be reached at 248-334-6877.



The most important thing is to not give up easily on your cat and try to find solutions before you resort to giving your cat up to a shelter or your vet to be euthanized. Although one should NOT feel guilty if this does become a last resort. That is more responsible and HUMANE than doing something as cruel as just abandoning them to the outdoors. Socialized cats do not do well living in the rough; esp. in our climate. One other possibility is finding the cat a new home where they are the only cat or animal as that may calm them down and get them back to normal.