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# SITS & WIGGLES

The Newsletter of the Animal Clinic of Chardon

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## EVERYTHING YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT LITTER BOXES

When you are deciding on litter boxes for your cat, think about location, size, type of litter, litter box management, and the number of litter boxes needed for your household. Here are some tips for designing the optimal litter box for your kitty:

### **How Many Litter Boxes Should I Have?**

The general rule of thumb is to have one litter box for each cat, plus one additional extra box. So, you would need 3 boxes if there are 2 cats in your home.

### **Where Should I Put the Litter Box?**

Look at the floor plan of your home to figure out the best place for the litter box. Cats usually prefer quiet, private places when they need to eliminate. Avoid busy areas of the home and locations where your cat could be cornered in, blocked off, or unable to flee. Also avoid placing food and water close to the litter box.



Place litter boxes in multiple locations that are out of view from other litter boxes and are easily accessible. Cats view litter boxes that are close to each other as one large litter box. In multi-cat households, having litter boxes in separate locations also allows a more timid cat can get to a litter box without passing by or getting blocked by a bully cat. (Continued on next page)

# EVERYTHING YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT LITTER BOXES (CONTINUED)

If your cat is toileting away from the litter box, place an additional litter box at a new site (temporarily or permanently) to get your cat to use a box again.

In a multi-level home, place a litter box on each level. If you have an older cat, place a litter box on the level where they spend the most time, as it may not be easy for them to go up and down stairs each time they need to use the box.

## How Big Should the Litter Box Be?

In general, bigger is better and many litter boxes are too small. Litter boxes should be 1 ½ times the length of your cat from the nose to the base of the tail. The litter box needs to be large enough to allow your cat to enter, turn around, scratch, and eliminate. Suitable alternatives to a store bought litter box can include concrete mixing trays or storage containers. For older cats that need a low entry, you can cut down the side, but please remember to check for any sharp edges.

Many cats do not like box liners or covers, but a shy cat may prefer a covered box.

## What Type of Litter Should I Use?

Soft, unscented clumping litters are preferred by most cats and these litters are easier for caregivers to clean. Many litters contain perfumed crystals or other scents which can cause asthma in cats – and in people! Others, such as cedar or pine, can have a scent that also bothers human and feline asthmatics. Aromatic or dusty litters, litter deodorizers, and box liners are also unpopular with many cats. Many cats prefer sand or soil litter which is similar to what they would use in the wild. Avoid litters with sharp or very hard consistency for older cats or those with sensitive paws.

## How Should I Maintain the Litter Box?

The litter box needs to be maintained daily which includes removing any waste a minimum of once per day and adding litter as needed. Wash the litter box every 1-4 weeks using soap and hot water only. Avoid using strong chemicals or any ammonia-based products. A box with non-clumping litter should be changed completely every week. Written by Dr. Ilona Rodan, DVM



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## 7 WAYS TO ENRICH CAT ENVIRONMENT WITH SCENT

Sometimes we forget that cats' noses are nearly as sensitive as those of dogs. Don't overlook scent-rich items that you can't smell, because they may rock your cat's world.

That said, cats prone to urine marking may be inspired to spray when they encounter a new scent or detect the presence of strange cats outside their house. Use scent enrichment with caution in these cats. Try one at a time, and mix up the smell-treats over time, to discover what works best for your cats.

**Crack Open Windows.** Many cats never get a whiff of fresh air, and the smell can be intoxicating fun for them. To ensure they can't escape, raise the window only a couple of inches to allow the breeze inside. Airborne smells change depending on the weather, so there's always something new. My cat Karma loves to stand on his hind legs and press his nose to the opening, especially when it rains.

**Logs, Sticks, Leaves.** Seasoned fireplace logs attract many cats and might serve as a scratch post alternative. My cat enjoys a cedar log, for example, and that smells good to humans, too. For cats who love Christmas trimmings, save a branch from the tree. Or fill a box or paper bag with dry leaves for your cat to sniff and play inside. Pinecones offer aroma, plus something fun to bat around the room. Some cats react to tatarian honeysuckle branches as though to catnip.

**Take-Out Treats.** Many cats beg for treats when they smell something yummy. Why not give them a sniff-treat once you're finished, and let them play with the empty paper take-out container? Avoid plastic, and cut handles on paper sacks to prevent them getting caught.

Some cats react to olives like catnip and roll on top of them in ecstasy. And the scent of a melon ball may surprise them, and you, with some sniffing fun.

**Flower Power.** Cat-safe plants and flowers delight many cats. Roses are edible, so treat your cat to a bouquet now and then (remove the thorns, of course!). Sunflowers, zinnias, snapdragons, and gerbera daisies are safe, as well as oat grass or dandelion. Pluck a handful of greens from the yard and offer to your cat.

**Catnip and More.** Many herbs we use in cooking are safe and fun for cats to sniff, and some are known to be feline favorites. Catnip, part of the mint family, affects many cats with a scent-induced kitty "high." Silver vine has a similar effect. And valerian can energize cats. Fresh work best, but even the dried form may inspire kitty love.

**Herbal Love.** Other safe herbs cats may enjoy sniffing include dill, oregano, parsley, and rosemary. Sprinkle herbs on a carpet or towel for your cat to enjoy. Try filling a plastic bag with catnip, drop in your cat's favorite toy mice for a few days, and then offer the refreshed toys.

**Essential Oils—Be Cautious!** While popular for people, essential oils can be dangerous for cats as they metabolize them differently. It is not recommended to apply essential oils to cats for this reason, but their scents can be beneficial. Lavender, which has natural sedative properties, may help soothe an anxious cat. Copaiba, helichrysum, and frankincense are also considered safe for cats. Before using essential oils, even in the form of diffused scents, around your cats, check with your veterinarian for recommendations.

Using scent environmentally can help reduce potential fear and stress in your cat. That not only helps your cat, it enriches the bond you share.

## DOG DAY OF SUMMER



Save the Date! Join us for the Dog Day of Summer. Vendors, contests, and fun for you and your dog!

When: Saturday, July 15th from 2 - 5 pm

Where: Chardon Square/Gazebo

***Why are kittens actually excellent bosses?***

***They have great littership.***

## ACOC Birthdays

Tim	5/2
Janet	5/13
Summer	5/14
Kirtley	5/24

