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The Litter Box Shuffle

By M.L. Scott

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Cat owners have a preoccupation with waste disposal that rivals only that of sanitation workers. Indeed, only a fellow cat lover could understand. The ultimate litter solution seems to elude us like the search for the Holy Grail. We know it's out there. And we know it should cost something less than a mortgage payment. Like Pavlovian subjects, our ears prick to attention and our wallets fly open at the mere hint of an easy and odorless answer.

The irony of this fixation lies in the fact that of all animal species, cats have a preeminent position as being among the cleanest. How many pets do their business and then spend an equal amount of time covering their tracks? Even people forget to flush. Hand a cat a roll of toilet paper and it would probably ask for a moist towelette.

For their owners however, going one on one with a toilet bowl and brush seems to offer less chance of fecal matter contact than the litter box shuffle. Whether we rake it, scoop it or crystallize it, we still feel incomplete. A little wistful, perhaps, as we eye Fido bound into a litter free abode after his morning sprint. For every hour spent taking the dog for a walk, there are four engaged in litter shopping, hauling litter in and out of the car, pouring it into the box, scooping clumps, smoothing it out, splatter management (don't ask) and carpet treatments for wayward torpedoes and seeping ooze. (Again, don't ask). Not to mention the incalculable cost of passing out from the ammonia fumes of an overdue litter box. Rousing from a toxic coma with a pooper-scooper in your hand and fecal waste down your pants does something to your self-esteem years of therapy can't erase.

Before many cat owners even contemplate how to handle the waste, they lose themselves in contemplation of the perfect litter box. Cat owners are faced with options that vary from motorized trays complete with motion detectors that purport to automate the process of separating the fecal clumps from the unused litter without mangling the cat to sifting litter boxes that allow you to shake, rattle and roll the waste into a neat little package.

However, even the perfect box won't get the waste from the receptacle to the local landfill without that human touch. And that's where things really start to get messy. Who knew that emptying the litter box could be a lesson in the chemical break down of amino acids? The interesting thing about kibble is that though it starts out as a solid with a sizzling bacon aroma, it ends up a semi liquid reeking of rank sulfur. And it sticks to everything. Everything. So whether your box sorts and separates like the postal office or rocks like Elvis Presley, the icky sticky bits make for litter box hell.

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What's a cat owner to do? You can't strap your cat to a catheter. (Can you???). In my torment I took to gazing at Petal (my cat) in the hope of any wisdom she might impart regarding litter management. After weeks of lurking in doorways and peering into her Kitty Kondo, Petal relented. Though the sight of my fumbling around in the litter box had become the source of endless cat entertainment, she considered my recent behavior tantamount to stalking and an invasion of her right to privacy. So, after extracting a promise of cat treats (and a restraining order barring me from the Kondo), she informed me that the solution was not only cost effective, but simple. Let the cat use the toilet and dump the litter box altogether. Sound strange? Well, it's no stranger than shelling out \$200 for a motor that spins waste into a plastic container. For less than \$20 you can buy a toilet training cat kit that will have most cats going potty in a few weeks.

For the more cynical, Petal suggests tossing the pooper-scoopers and giving up on extending the life

of soiled litter. Who came up with that idea anyway? If there's waste in the box, the litter is dirty. All of the litter is dirty. Would you sit on a toilet seat with just a little bit of splatter? Slap some baggies on your hands and toss the whole thing. If you want to save on litter, then don't put so much in the pan. Your cat doesn't need to tunnel her way out of the box. It's a litter box, not an amusement park. She wants out of there as much as you do. So you buy a few more pan liners and extra litter each month. Your nose and your lungs will appreciate the investment. Copyright 2004. Sophistication Alley Ltd. All Rights Reserved.

The author fosters rescued animals and helps operate pet related sites including Adoring Pets at www.AdoringPets.com which helps to instill compassionate values and empathy towards animals by showcasing Assistance Animals, Therapy and Companion Pets; www.SundayColors.com a discount gift store; www.HandsnPaws.com a pet travel store with pet travel accessories and www.Pawstogo.com an everyday pet supply store with common pet problem solutions.

At Last! Cat Litter Boxes Don't Have To Be Evil

By Niall Kennedy

There is nothing worse for cat or cat owner than a smelly litter box.

For many people, the litter box is the worst of part of owning a cat. Not only is it something people dread to clean but it is also dusty and dirty. And, those who have to clean it can find themselves more susceptible to cat diseases that are present there. Sure, it's a bad job but it doesn't have to be too hard either.

There are many new litter boxes being designed to make the job, well, easier. One of them is the hooded litter box. These give the privacy to cats who are more sensitive and they also keep dust down considerably. They are idea of a single cat owner as long as they are cleaned regularly. Those who do not want to handle the litter can use removable liners for these boxes. They can lift out the whole liner and throw it out. All you need to do is put in a new liner and add the fresh litter to it.

Self Cleaning Boxes

The Litter Box Shuffle

Another option is the self cleaning box. These are idea for families that have many cats. Or they can be a good choice for anyone who doesn't want to have to deal with it. A rake removes the soiled litter into a removable receptacle which leaves the box clean. All you need to do is to discard the contents of the receptacle right into the trash.

To teach your kitten to use the litter box, all you need to do is to position it in the right place and keep it very clean. The litter box should never be located next to wear the cat sleeps or near where his food is.

Once in the right place, you'll need to tell him what the box is used for. To do this, place the cat in the box and rake your fingers through the litter. The cat may decide to start using the box right away. When he does, praise him greatly. If he just wants out, play with him a few minutes and then put him back in. Repeat this several times but don't push it. You don't want to make him frustrated.

When to use the Box?

About ten to fifteen minutes after your cat eats, put him back into the litter box. When he uses it, praise him for doing so. When he is napping, watch him so that you can take him to the litter box as he wakes up.

Remember that cats respond better to praise than to scolding. If he becomes angry or frustrated, you will not accomplish anything. Place the box in the spot where he most frequently has accidents and encourage him to use it.

A cat may stop using his litter box if you don't keep it clean. Most cats will continue to use the litter box once he has done so several times, but you need to keep it clean. Also, a dirty litter box can lead to cat health problems so make sure to keep it clean.

These are some quick and easy tips to keeping your cat's litter box clean. If you use them your cat will be your best friend.

Niall Kennedy is a lifelong pet lover and has worked in several pet sanctuaries. Best Pet Health Information is a resource that brings you information and news, tips and reviews to help ensure

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