



Stanhope Park Veterinary Hospital

FELINE BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

LITTER TRAYS:

- Quiet, secluded area away from food and water with easy access and escape route – other pets should not be able to sneak up on a cat in a litter tray. Also avoid placing trays near cat flaps or full length glass windows due to the perceived threat from outside.
- Litter trays should be located on each floor of the house.
- At least one litter tray per cat plus one extra in different locations.
- Consider individual's litter preferences and avoid frequent changes of litter type – most cats prefer fine sand-like clay clumping litter. Also ensure a sufficient depth of litter of approximately 3cm, to allow the cat to perform natural digging behaviour.
- Remove dirty litter / faeces as soon as possible (*clumps should be removed daily, and a full change of litter at least weekly after washing the tray with hot soapy water*).
- Consider litter tray size (*should be at least one and half times length of cat from nose to base of tail*), and whether open or covered may be preferred – while some cats like the privacy of a covered tray, many feel vulnerable confined within a small space with only one exit point. If using a covered tray, ensure that any door-flap is removed as this can be one obstacle too many for a cat making their escape!
- Avoid polythene litter tray liners and litter deodorants which can be unpleasant for cats, with their claws getting caught in the liners when digging up the litter, and an overpowering smell from the deodorant leading to litter tray aversion.

ACCESS OUTDOORS:

- Preferably more than one access point in multi-cat households as aggressor cats may block entry / exit points.
- If possible, ensure cat flaps do not exit onto an exposed area where the cat may be ambushed or worried about going out. If not flexible in location, then consider providing coverage with plants or boxes etc.
- *Can other cats enter through the cat flap?* This can cause anxiety. Magnetic collars are available but the tags may be lost resulting in the cat being locked out and the flap takes a few seconds to open, which means other cats may also be able to force through and become trapped inside. Microchip recognisable cat flaps can be considered.

If you have any questions about your pets, call us on 01325 620968 or ask a member of our team



Stanhope Park Veterinary Hospital

FOOD:

- Own food and water bowl for each cat should be provided in convenient locations that provides some privacy whilst eating or drinking, as well as an escape route.
- Locate bowls so that another animal cannot sneak up.
- Ensure food bowls are kept separate from litter trays and water bowls, as such resources would all be kept separate in a cat's natural wild habitat to avoid contamination.
- Consider cats' natural feeding behaviours – predatory activities such as stalking and pouncing can be stimulated by hiding food around the house or using treat balls and puzzle feeders etc.

WATER:

- Does the cat prefer running or dripping water? Consider a water fountain.
- Does the cat prefer glass / metal / ceramic bowls or a certain shape or size? Most cats dislike drinking from plastic bowls as it can taint the water, with most preferring ceramic. Many cats also like wide, shallow bowls filled right up to the rim, so that the whiskers do not touch the sides, and they do not have to drop their head whilst drinking (*they like to be able to watch for potential threats*). Some cats can be startled by their reflections in metal bowls.
- Does the cat prefer tap water; rain water; puddle water; bottled water?

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

- ACCESS TO OWNER: Does the cat seek human contact or prefer to get away from humans?
- BED / CORE AREA: Does the area where the cat spends most of its sleeping time, provide some privacy and also have an escape route? Can other animals sneak up?
- PASSING PLACES: In multi-cat households, does the cat have a way of getting past another cat that may be blocking a corridor or stairway etc?
- SCRATCHING SURFACES: Is the cat provided with horizontal and vertical scratching surfaces? Vertical surfaces should be at least the height of the cat at full stretch.
- HIDING PLACES: Is the cat able to hide / get up high if needs be? Cats should feel safe in their chosen spot and not be removed or disturbed / annoyed while hiding there.
- INTERACTIONS AND PLAY: Does the cat prefer to be petted and groomed or prefer play interactions? Toys that mimic prey are preferred and cats like novelty so provide a variety of toys and rotate / replace regularly to maintain interest.

If you have any questions about your pets, call us on 01325 620968 or ask a member of our team