

## **Common Behavior Problems**

### ***LITTER BOX***

Litter box problems top the list of reasons for owners to give up their cats.

This can be resolved with a little work. Many products sold are not suitable for cats because they do not satisfy the cat's natural instincts. Studies show that the vast majority of cats prefer the sand-like texture of the clumping litters--though it is not recommended for kittens under the age of 4 months. Hooded litter boxes defy the natural instinct of the cat to find a place to eliminate, which has easy escape potential. You may not notice but the odor is concentrated inside and the cat has to step in. His sensitive nose may reject the litter box in favor of the much fresher-smelling corner of the dining room. The litter boxes should be roomy, clean and unscented, and placed in a private, yet accessible area.

### ***DESTRUCTIVE SCRATCHING***

Scratching problems are correctable, providing the cat with suitable scratching post can satisfy this instinctive behavior and encouraging appropriate behavior is generally all that is required. It should be sturdy and tall enough to let the cat stretch to his full height. If he still persists in scratching the furniture, try placing a few balloons or pieces of aluminum foil around the area. The noise of a bursting balloon or crackling foil should frighten him off without hurting him.

### ***HAIR ALL OVER THE HOUSE***

Most cats enjoy being brushed, and will come running when they see the brush in your hand. Frequent brushing will greatly minimize the amount of loose fur settling in the corners of your house, and will also prevent a lot of hairballs being coughed up.

### ***JUMPING ON THE COUNTER***

To keep your cat off the kitchen counter, stack a few disposable baking pans along the edge of the counter so that they fall down and make noise when the cat jumps up. In many cases, though, you can simply pick the cat up off the counter, say "No!" firmly, and drop him (firmly but not sufficient to hurt) onto the floor. For this and other inappropriate behaviors, clap your hands loudly together and say "No!" or squirt him with a spray bottle.

### ***PLANT EATING AND DIGGING***

What could be more fun for a little tiger than to have the jungle to play in! From Kitty's point of view a potted plant is a snack, an entertainment center, and sometimes a latrine, all in one, perfect! Unfortunately you don't see your plants that way. Rubbing moistened black pepper onto the leaves and placing stones on top of the dirt will discourage Kitty from tasting or digging in the plant.

### ***HUNTING AT 4:00 A.M.***

If you are regularly awakened by a 4:00 AM feline alarm clock, then give some thought to conducting a strenuous play session before bedtime. Fishing pole-type toys allow you to relax in a chair while Kitty runs off some of that pent-up energy. Ten to fifteen minutes is usually all it takes to wear Kitty out. Don't stop until he is lying on his side batting at the toy, too tired to chase after it.