

Litter Box Issues

Cats that avoid using their litterboxes are one of the most common reasons cats are surrendered to shelters. There are solutions and if the proper steps are followed, you can get your **RagaMuffin cat** back to using their litterbox and make life for your cat and yourself more pleasant.

Ensure there is no medical cause. The first thing you must do if you see a **RagaMuffin kitten** or **RagaMuffin cat** urinating or defecating outside the litterbox is to take your **RagaMuffin kitten** or **RagaMuffin cat** to the vet to determine if there is a medical reason for the litterbox avoidance. A **RagaMuffin cat** can have a urinary tract infection, crystals or stones, making urinating painful, and also causing spasms of the bladder so that the cat just urinates wherever he or she is when the spasm occurs. Urinating outside the litterbox can also be your **RagaMuffin kitten's** way of telling you that there is a physical problem. If it is determined that there is a medical reason for your **RagaMuffin kitten** or **RagaMuffin cat's** behavior, you can work with your vet to get your **RagaMuffin kitten** or **RagaMuffin cat** healthy and resolve the problem.

Cleaning litterbox. If it is determined that there is no physical cause for the litterbox avoidance, you need to look at the environment. You should start with the litterbox. **RagaMuffin kittens** and **RagaMuffin cats** are scrupulously clean animals and a dirty litterbox may turn them off, especially given their heightened sense of smell. With one **RagaMuffin kitten** or **RagaMuffin cat**, litterboxes should be scooped at least once per day and the litter changed out on a regular basis. The litterbox should be cleaned with hot water and a disinfectant. Bleach on a 1:10 ratio is a good disinfectant, but make sure to remove all organic matter before spraying with bleach. Also, since bleach breaks down quickly, the solution for cleaning should be made fresh the day you intend to use it. Rinse and dry the litterbox well and fill with two to three inches of fresh nonscented litter. While we may prefer scented litter, **RagaMuffin cats** do not.

Number and location of litterboxes. The number of litterboxes and their location can also be a contributing factor to litterbox avoidance. A good rule of thumb is that you should have a number of litterboxes equal to the number of **RagaMuffin kittens** or **RagaMuffin cats** you have, plus one additional box. The litterboxes should be placed on different levels of your house if you have more than one level. Litterboxes should not be placed in areas where there will be a lot of activity, traffic and noise. In order to alleviate any fear the **RagaMuffin kitten** or **RagaMuffin cat** may have of being trapped and ambushed by another cat, place the litterboxes in an area where the **RagaMuffin kitten** or **RagaMuffin cat** has a good view of the room and can escape if they feel the need to. It is not a good idea to place litterboxes in closets or behind doors.

Type of litterbox. Another issue to consider is the type of litterbox that you are using. Many cats do not like the motorized litterboxes and the noise scares them. Covered litterboxes are preferred by humans, but not by **RagaMuffin kittens** or **RagaMuffin cats**. The covered litterboxes trap odors and since **RagaMuffin kittens** and **RagaMuffin cats**, and every other breed of cat, have a heightened sense of smell, they prefer litterboxes with no cover. In addition, a **RagaMuffin kitten** or **RagaMuffin cat** is more likely to feel trapped in a covered litterbox. You must also

consider the size of the litterbox. You need large, uncovered boxes. Ideally the litterbox should be one and a half times the length of your **RagaMuffin kitten** or **RagaMuffin cat**. An ideal solution for a litterbox that is less expensive than the litterboxes sold in pet stores, are storage containers. You can purchase storage containers with higher sides, so litter scatter is reduced. Clear storage containers are ideal, because your **RagaMuffin kitten** or **RagaMuffin cat** can see outside the container.

Properly cleaning soiled areas. If an area that has been previously soiled is not cleaned properly, it is likely that your **RagaMuffin kittens** or **RagaMuffin cats** will return to that area and urinate. You must clean the area with a good enzyme cleaner and let it dry naturally. It may take several applications to get the odor out and it often takes 7-10 days to be effective. One product that has proven effective is made by Just Rite Cleaning Products. The owner is available to answer questions and tell you how to use the products. Their website address is <http://www.justrite.com>.

Conflicts between cats in a household. Sometimes conflicts among cats in a household will result in stress and consequently result in litterbox avoidance. Some solutions are to make sure there is enough space in your home for each of your **RagaMuffin kittens** and **RagaMuffin cats** to have their own "territory." Cat trees can help in this regard. In addition, if there is conflict between two **RagaMuffin kittens** or **RagaMuffin cats**, time taken to reintroduce the **RagaMuffin kittens** or **RagaMuffin cats** can do wonders. Separate the cats so that one cat is in a separate room. Alternate the **RagaMuffin kitten** or **RagaMuffin cat** that is in the separate room. Initially, let them smell each other under the door, just as if you were introducing them for the first time. After about a week, put a gate in the doorway and feed the **RagaMuffin kittens** or **RagaMuffin cats** on either side of the doorway. Do this for about a week and then take the gate away and feed each cat on either side of the doorway. Also, give each of them a favorite treat on either side of the doorway. Do not let the **RagaMuffin kittens** or **RagaMuffin cats** together without supervision at this time. After feeding and giving treats with no gate for about a week, use a teaser and play with the **RagaMuffin kittens** or **RagaMuffin cats** together, making sure that each cat has equal play time with the teaser. These tips can do wonders in making friends out of former enemies.