🐾 A SUPURR GUIDE FROM KJ · YOUR KITTY CORRESPONDENT

KJ’s SuPURR Guide: When Your Cat Stops Using the Litter Box

If your cat suddenly stops using the litter box, it can feel stressful fast. Messy. Confusing. Sometimes even discouraging.

Take a breath.

Because in almost every case, your cat isn’t being difficult.

They’re saying to you, their human: “Something isn’t right for me. Please help.”

Cats don’t have many ways to communicate pain, fear, or stress. When something in their world feels wrong, their behavior becomes the message. And the litter box is one of the clearest signals they have.

First: Start with a vet visit

Any time a cat changes litter box habits suddenly, the kindest first step is a veterinary check.

Urinary infections, bladder inflammation, digestive upset, kidney issues, or even arthritis can make using the litter box painful. Cats often associate the box with the pain itself.

In their mind it becomes: “That place hurt last time. I shouldn’t go there.”

A quick vet visit helps rule out medical causes and ensures your cat isn’t suffering silently. Even experienced cat parents start here.

Second: Think about safety

Using the litter box is one of the moments when a cat feels most vulnerable. They can’t move quickly, their attention is focused, and their guard is down.

If another cat stalks the hallway, blocks access, or startles them, the litter box can begin to feel unsafe.

Your cat may choose a different location simply because it feels more protected.

Sometimes adding another litter box or moving one to a calmer spot restores that sense of safety.

Third: Look at the location

Many litter box issues are actually location issues.

Cats prefer boxes that are easy to reach, quiet, open enough to see their surroundings, and not tucked into tight corners with only one exit.

A helpful rule is one litter box per cat, plus one extra, placed in different areas of the home.

This removes pressure and gives cats options.

Fourth: Notice the emotional climate

Cats are incredibly sensitive to changes around them.

Illness in the family, guests, routine shifts, or household stress can ripple through their nervous systems.

Sometimes a litter box change is a cat saying: “Things feel different. I don’t feel settled.”

Gentle routines — feeding times, play sessions, cozy resting spots, and calm spaces — can help their nervous systems settle again.

Your calm helps regulate theirs.

Remember this

When a cat stops using the litter box, it’s not bad behavior. It’s communication.

Your cat is trusting you enough to say: “Something is wrong in my world.”

Start with a vet visit. Then gently look at safety, location, and stress in the home.

With patience and curiosity, most litter box challenges can be solved.

Your cat isn’t trying to make life harder. They’re simply asking their human for help the only way they know how.

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