

Accepted Manuscript

Field assessment of cats' litterbox substrate preferences

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PII: S1558-7878(17)30232-0

DOI: [10.1016/j.jveb.2018.03.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jveb.2018.03.002)

Reference: JVEB 1124

To appear in: *Journal of Veterinary Behavior*

Received Date: 27 November 2017

Revised Date: 5 February 2018

Accepted Date: 7 March 2018

Please cite this article as: Beugnet, V., Field assessment of cats' litterbox substrate preferences, *Journal of Veterinary Behavior* (2018), doi: 10.1016/j.jveb.2018.03.002.

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8 9 10 **Abstract**

11 Cats living inside a home without any possibility of outdoor access have to defecate in a
12 litter box. In order to suit the cats' needs, several recommendations seem to be agreed upon. The
13 litter box has to be clean and in a calm spot easily accessible to the cat. It has to be a size that fits
14 the cat. The number of litter boxes has to be correlated with the number of cats present at home
15 as well as the size of the household. The box should contain a substrate that allows the cat to
16 comfortably dig in it. The box should be of a size and the litter of a style that the cat can defecate
17 without soiling itself in the process. The litter should be sufficiently absorbent, and manage odor.

18 Facing a great range of commercial possibilities, cat owners have to make a choice. There is
19 no standard recommendation about substrate.. The study sought to identify preferences of cats
20 regarding a specific type of substrate by comparing clay granules, silica in micro-granules, silica
21 granules and wood pellets. The study was divided in two phases. Eighteen cats were selected for
22 the first phase that lasted 4 weeks. Three strictly identical and uncovered litter boxes were
23 presented to the cats. Each box contained one of the substrates (i.e., clay granules, silica in micro-
24 granules, wood pellets). The cats demonstrated a significant preference for the clay or silicate
25 substrates (no significant difference between them) as opposed to the wood pellets. In the second
26 phase, 12 cats were observed during 2 weeks in order to compare their reaction to clay and
27 silicate. Here, the same grain texture (i.e., granules) was used. The cats showed a significant
28 inclination to defecate into the clay substrate, instead of the silica substrate.

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