

INNOVATION STORY : MINERALS

CLUMPING LITTER CONUNDRUM

**THE INNOVATION: ODORLESS, SCOOPABLE CAT LITTER**

BACKGROUND: Beginning in the late 1940's and as recently as 1990, a soft, naturally occurring, clay-like material known as "fuller's earth" was the standard for cat litter due to its absorbency and low cost. Unfortunately, it was also incredibly wasteful—cleaning a litter box full of fuller's earth litter meant dumping out its entire contents. As a result, millions of tons of litter waste were being dumped into landfills.

In the mid 1980's, a few companies attempted to combat the copious amounts of cat-related waste with "scoopable litter"—litter that would form a "clump" around animal waste, allowing owners to dispose of only the soiled portions rather than the entire box. While the concept was innovative, the execution was poor—clumping performance was inconsistent, leaving much to be desired...and discarded.

With decades of experience in the minerals industry, AMCOL (American Colloid Company at that time) felt certain that they could overcome the problems of inefficient clumping. After a thorough examination of the underperforming litters, chemists and geologists got to work experimenting with processing techniques and running absorbency tests on various materials. It was during this time that they discovered that bentonite—with its natural affinity for liquid and odor control—was the perfect solution for the clumping conundrum. By 1991, American Colloid patented its new scoopable cat litter, paving the way for a global revolution in kitty litter clean-up.

RESULT: Thanks to AMCOL innovation, 80% less litter waste is thrown away each year with clumping cat litter versus non-clumping litter. It's no wonder that some of the biggest cat litter brands on store shelves today boast AMCOL patented technology. After all, since you can't control what comes out of your cat, you should at least be able to control what comes out of your wallet. It's money-saving, environmental solutions like this one that drive AMCOL as a global leader in innovation.



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