



LBA Foster Training Handout

What is LBA?

LBA is an avoidance of using the litter box for urination, defecation or both. At least 10% of all cats develop some type of elimination issues over the course of their lifetime. Elimination issues can develop for many reasons. We at CHS and our foster parents become the detective to try and figure out the cause of elimination issues and how to fix the problem or at a minimum manage it.

Reviewing the reasons a cat may eliminate outside the litter box

1. Surface Preference – some cats develop preferences for eliminating on certain surfaces or textures like carpet, potting soil, and beds/bedding.
2. Litter Preference or Aversion – A sensitive sense of smell can influence a cat's reaction to his or her litter. Cats who have grown accustomed to a certain type of litter might dislike the smell or feel of a different litter. A majority of cats prefer un-scented, clumping litter
3. Location Preference or Aversion – Cats do develop a preference for where they like to eliminate and may avoid locations they do not like. They prefer quiet places such as a room that is rarely used. You should never keep a litter box in a high traffic area like a living room, family room or a laundry room.
4. Household Stress – Household/shelter stress can cause litter box problems. Cats can be stressed by events that we don't normally think of as traumatic. Changes in things that indirectly affect the cat like moving, adding new animals or family members to a household can affect their stress levels.
5. Multi-Cat household – In foster homes with multiple cats you should create multiple access point for valuable resources such as litter boxes. Spread these throughout the foster room/home to prevent competition.
6. Negative Litter Box Association – Another common reason is that something happened to upset her while she was using the litter box. She may enter the box, but then leave very quickly, sometimes before even using it. The cat may have a medical condition that caused her pain when they eliminated, she may have learned to associate the discomfort with using the litter box.
7. Not enough litter boxes- this is another common, very easily fixable reason for LBA. When fostering a litter or more than one cat, it is always advised to have at least one litter box per cat plus one extra.
8. Older/Geriatric – Geriatric cats or cats with physical limitations may have a difficult time using certain types of litter boxes such as top-entry boxes, or litter boxes with high sides. Often, in these cases a simple solution of changing the style of the box or construction of a special one will solve the issue.
9. Urine Marking – Urine marking is often considered a litter box avoidance issue however the cause and treatment is entirely different from other LBA issues. Cats who urine mark will regularly eliminate in their litter boxes, but will also leave small amount of urine in other places most often on vertical surfaces.

Medical reasons a cat may eliminate outside of the litter box

There are several common medical reasons a cat may avoid the litter box. A UTI or urinary tract infection is an infection of the lower urinary tract. Some symptoms are frequent urination, producing only a small amounts of urine and avoiding the litter box (usually due to an association of pain when urinating in the box.)

Feline interstitial cystitis is a neurological disorder that affects a cat's bladder. The may urinate frequently and may appear to be straining while trying to urinate there may or may not be a presence of blood in the urine also. FIC requires monitoring and veterinary treatment.

Kidney stones or blockages often go undiagnosed until there is a problem. Kidney stones do not typically cause noticeable signs of disease until they become very large. Bladder, kidney stones and blockages are more common in



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male cats than female cats and are diagnosed by x-ray or ultrasound. These situations can be serious medical conditions that require immediate veterinary care.

Tips on what to do and not do in LBA

Some basic tips for prevention of LBA include

1. Scooping the box daily
2. Provide a large enough litter box
3. Use clumping, unscented litter (unless directed by CHS to use something different)
4. Offer more than one box
5. Keep the bed of litter no more than 1 to 2" depth
6. Be sure the box is in a quiet, low traffic area that allows the cat to see anything that approaches.
7. Rinse out the box weekly using baking soda or unscented soap

Things you should not do

1. Do not use litter box liners
2. Place the litter box in a cornered area
3. Do not over fill the litter box
4. Avoid electrical outlets and heavy wiring
5. Avoid placing the litter box in a laundry room
6. Do not place food and water bowls next to the litter box

To assist in the resolution of a litter box problem you should provide only a single room versus the entire home for your foster cat. Make sure the litter boxes are accessible at all times and offer different types of litter in boxes side by side to determine which type is preferred. Make the inappropriate elimination areas less appealing by placing tin foil on surfaces, double sided sticky tape, motion detection lights for dark areas or an upside down carpet runner. Clean all soiled areas with an enzymatic cleanser designed to neutralize pet odors. We recommend using Natures Miracle.

NEVER, Rub your foster cat's nose in their urine or feces, do not scold your cat or carry/drag her to the litterbox Do not clean up accidents with an ammonia based cleanser. Urine contains ammonia and therefore cleaning with ammonia based cleansers can increase the likely hood you foster cat will continue to eliminate in that spot.

Transitioning from shelter to home

You should make the transition from shelter to foster home as stress free as possible for your foster cat. Try to keep their daily routine as stable as possible (feeding, playing, socialization). Choose a quiet room with litter noise or traffic as your foster cat's home base. Set up your foster cat's room with litterbox, food, bedding and toys prior to arrival. If this is not possible then set up these items BEFORE opening the carrier. Limit activities in the foster room to low key activities for the first few days.

Reducing stress for your foster cat is very important as cats can hide their stress signals very well. Try to keep their routine as predictable as possible, identify and if able eliminate any source of frustration in your foster cats environment. Cats are extremely sensitive to sound and sights. With the permission of the behavior and foster team, you can incorporate the use of synthetic pheromone (feliway) diffusers or sprays. Do not disturb or create loud noises while you foster cat is successfully using the litter box. Once he is outside the litter box, you can sooth him with soft voices and praise.



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Some final tips for success in fostering and your own pets.

In multi cat households guarding the litter box or other high value items may also cause stress. Be sure to offer enough items and spaces for each cat/kitten in your care. High value items include food dishes, perching spots, resting spots, litter boxes and water bowls. Citrus smelling products may help make the area that you are unable to close off unappealing for inappropriate elimination. Avoid placing the litter box in the basement area, some cats will not hold their urine very long if they have to travel several floors to get to their litter box. Avoid using pine or crystal type litters.

Indications that your cat is not fond of the litter being used is perching on the edge or corner of the litter box, not wanting to touch the litter, and jumping in/out very rapidly, not wanting to dig around and dashing out of the box. In multi cat households you should have one box per cat plus one extra. Both the foster care coordinator and the behavior coordinators are available to support you through this process. Don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns.

CRATE TRAINING PROGRAM

The crate training program is a 30 day program to assist in retraining a cat with persistent LBA to reuse their litter box. It is important for foster families to follow the training plan as written. Patience and consistency is the key to success. The training plan can be difficult on the foster parent and weekly communication with your foster team and behavior team will be beneficial. You should report any LBA during the crate training period.

The crate is a traditional dog style wire crate. The size will be determined by the behavior team. The plastic tray liner will be included to contain the litter. It will provide enough room to hold a small bed and a large litter box. Bowls will be attached to the front sides of the crate. Please set the crate up in a quiet location in the foster home.

The set up

Set up the crate, as mentioned, in a quiet location of the foster home. Line the bottom of the crate with the CHS provided litter. Place a small comfortable bed to the rear of the crate. Mount the bowls to the front area of the crate for easy access for feeding and cleaning.

Training weeks 1-4

1. Introduce your foster cat to the crate by offering a tasty treat or a small amount of wet food. The first 1-2 weeks the cats' activities will be limited to the crate. Play and socialization can be achieved by dangling the wand toys through the crate wire for a game. Time outside the crate is strictly limited to cleaning his crate only. Keep the crate and environment clean at all times. Be sure to praise and offer treats for good behavior outside the crate while cleaning. When finished cleaning your foster cat is returned to the crate. *You must report any LBA outside of the box or that occurs while out of the crate for cleaning.*
2. For week 2 you will need to clean and wash the crate tray thoroughly with warm water and soap, dry and return it to the crate. Add a litter box with 1 to 2" of CHS provided litter. The litter box should have low enough sides to allow for easy access in and out of the box. Continue to clean the box and crate often to provide a continued clean environment. Play and social time is still limited to the crate and out of the crate time is limited to cleaning only. *You must report any LBA outside of the box or that occurs while out of the crate for cleaning.*



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3. Now that you are on to week 3 your foster cat can come out of their crate under supervision and only in the room the crate is located in. Place a litter box in a quiet corner of the room so that he/she has a second option when outside of the crate. Let your foster cat out of the crate for socialization, grooming and interaction time several times per day. This is important stimulation and bonding for both you and your foster pet. Reward your foster cat for any and all good behavior outside of the crate. *You must report any LBA outside of the box or that occurs while out of the crate during supervised play and interaction.*
4. **Congratulations!** You and your foster cat made it to the final week of a very difficult training program! Your foster cat no longer needs to spend any time in the crate. Your foster cat should continue to remain in the foster room but is not crated at all. Use multiple litter boxes in the room so that she has several to choose from. Set up a drop off appointment from foster care for your foster cat's next step. Please be detailed in your foster report card on what worked well, what your foster cat likes and dislikes.