



## A Strategy For Houstraining For Cats

by Brenda F. Barnette, CEO

Houstraining a new kitten or cat is more a matter of helping them start off on the right paw in your home. Instinctively, cats have a desire to keep themselves clean and will look for a way to dig and bury their waste. So all you need to do is cooperate with their desire to do the right thing, in the right place.

Pick a good location for the litterbox. For a kitten this means very close by. It is often a good idea to confine a kitten or a new cat for a few days to a small, get-acquainted room with a cozy bed, food & water bowls, and her toys on one side of the room and her litterbox on the other side. Visit her often and gently put her in the litterbox several times a day, especially after eating.

For adult cats and real estate, location is everything! Cats like their privacy and their litterbox placed in a consistent location. Do not place the litterbox in a noisy, heavy-traffic location, or next to the washing machine, or in the middle of a cold garage. If you have a multiple-story house, you should have a litterbox on each level. If you have a multiple cat family, it's ideal if you can have a box for each cat.

Most cats will maintain good litterbox habits their entire lives. If your cat begins to use places other than the litterbox, you should call your veterinarian. Some medical conditions can cause a change in a cat's litterbox habits.

It's all about scratching. Some cats are finicky about types of litter but most are not and generic litter is usually fine. In fact, all cats really need is to be able to get a scratching sensation. Years ago when I worked in veterinarian hospitals and later when I had my own boarding kennels, we used small pie-pans as litter boxes in which we put about a tablespoon of litter. These were changed with each use. We found that the cats would scratch and scratch and scratch, but rarely missed their pan. They knew what a little place to scratch meant.

Keep the litterbox clean! Your cat needs to have a clean box with fresh litter. The litterbox should contain about 1½ - 2 inches of fresh litter and solid wastes should be scooped out once or twice daily. Depending on the litter, you will need to completely change and wash the litterbox regularly. Clean the container with soap and water with some vinegar or lemon juice to neutralize the urine odors. A thin layer of baking soda in the bottom of the litterbox will also help absorb odors without repelling your cat.

Depending on the litterbox location and the cat, a covered or an uncovered box may work best in your house. Using a covered box can help control the odor in your home, offers added privacy for your cat and is very helpful for cats with poor aim.

Once you have a brand of litter, the type of box and the location your cat likes, avoid making sudden changes. If you want to change the litter, try mixing in the old brand for a few days with the new as a way of making a smooth transition.

House cats are clean and wonderful pets suitable for large homes in the country or tiny apartments in the city. Purrrrrrrs.

### Board of Directors

Chuck Stempler  
Chair

Martha Fuller  
Vice Chair

Elwood (Woody) Hertzog  
Vice Chair

Kaycee Krysty, CPA/PFS, CFP®  
Vice Chair

Peter Truex  
Secretary

Lee Zuker  
Treasurer

Brenda F. Barnette, CEO

John Carmack

Greg Conway

Cindy Spodek Dickey

Rich Finlay

Annette Jacobs

Candace Joy

Roberta Martoza

Gary McAvoy

Peter Parsons

Eddie Pasatiempo

Dan Rosen, Ph.D.

Herb Weisbaum

Heidi Weston

Michele Vivona

Sandy Willis, DVM, DACVIM

Charlotte Yarkoni

### Chief Executive Officer

Brenda F. Barnette  
Phone: (425) 649-7550  
Email: [brenda@seattlehumane.org](mailto:brenda@seattlehumane.org)

13212 S.E. Eastgate Way  
Bellevue, WA 98005-4408  
[www.seattlehumane.org](http://www.seattlehumane.org)