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## IAABC Statement on LIMA

### What Is LIMA?

“LIMA” is an acronym for the phrase “least intrusive, minimally aversive.” LIMA describes a trainer or behavior consultant who uses the least intrusive, minimally aversive strategy out of a set of humane and effective tactics likely to succeed in achieving a training or behavior change objective. LIMA adherence also requires consultants to be adequately educated and skilled in order to ensure that the least intrusive and aversive procedure is used. <sup>1</sup>

LIMA does not justify the use of punishment in lieu of other effective interventions and strategies. In the vast majority of cases, desired behavior change can be affected by focusing on the animal's environment, physical well-being, and operant and classical interventions such as differential reinforcement of an alternative behavior, desensitization, and counter-conditioning.

### LIMA Is Competence-Based

LIMA requires trainers/consultants to work to increase the use of positive reinforcement and eliminate the use of punishment when working with animal and human clients. In order to ensure best practices, consultants should pursue and maintain competence in animal behavior consulting and training through continuing education, and hands-on experience. Trainers/consultants should not advise on problems outside the recognized boundaries of their competencies and experience. <sup>2</sup>

### Positive Reinforcement and Understanding the Learner

Positive reinforcement should be the first line of teaching, training, and behavior change program considered, and should be applied consistently. Positive reinforcement is associated with the lowest incidence of aggression, attention seeking, avoidance, and fear in learners. <sup>3</sup>

Only the learner determines what may be reinforcing. It is crucial that the trainer/consultant understands and has the ability to appropriately apply this principle. This fact may mean that the trainer/consultant assesses any handling, petting, food, tool, and environment each time the learner experiences them. Personal bias must not determine the learner's experience. The measure of each stimulus is whether the learner's target behavior is strengthening or weakening, not the trainer/consultant's intent or preference.

*The International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants supports a Least Intrusive, Minimally Aversive (LIMA) approach to behavior modification and training.*

### Systematic Problem Solving and Strategies

The trainer/consultant is responsible for ensuring learner success through a consistent, systematic approach that identifies a specific target behavior, the purpose of that behavior, and the consequences that maintain the behavior.

A variety of learning and behavior change strategies may come into play during a case. Ethical use of this variety always depends on the trainer/consultant's ability to adequately problem solve and to understand the impact of each action on the learner, as well as sensitivity toward the learner's experience.

### Preventing Abuse

We seek to prevent the abuses and potential repercussions of inappropriate, poorly applied, and inhumane uses of punishment and of overly-restrictive management and confinement strategies. The potential effects of punishment can include aggression or counter-aggression; suppressed behavior (preventing the trainer/consultant from adequately reading the animal); increased anxiety and fear; physical harm; a negative association with the owner or handler; increased unwanted behavior; and, new, unwanted behaviors. <sup>4</sup>

### Choice and Control for the Learner

LIMA guidelines require that trainer/consultants always offer the learner as much control and choice as possible. Trainer/consultants must treat each individual of any species with respect and awareness of the learner's individual nature, preferences, abilities, and needs. <sup>5</sup>

## What Do You Want the Animal to do?

We focus on reinforcing desired behaviors, and always ask the question, "What do you want the animal to do?" Relying on punishment in training does not answer this question, and therefore offers no acceptable behavior for the animal to learn to replace the unwanted behavior. These LIMA guidelines do not justify the use of aversive methods and tools including, but not limited to, the use of electronic, choke or prong collars in lieu of other effective positive reinforcement interventions and strategies.

## ADDENDUM

The use of shock in training and behavior is not considered a best practice by the IAABC or the Joint Standards of Practice, and is strongly discouraged.

Our goal is to eliminate the use of shock devices from training and behavior work, and to do so by modeling, educating, and providing members with effective alternatives.

In order to remain a community of learning and betterment, the IAABC is open to all practitioners interested in seeking and following best practices.

Learning is an iterative process, and we understand that change is difficult, especially in an ongoing practice of training and behavior. Therefore, we're requiring that members agree to the following conditions of membership:

- Members will work to eliminate the use of shock completely from their practice.
- Before applying shock or using shock devices, IAABC members will consult with a Certified IAABC Consultant or Board Certified Behaviorist to review the case and ensure that all possible, less intrusive, aversive options have been worked.
  - Consultations ought to assess the current skills of the trainer/behavior consultant, strategies being implemented, body language of the dog, and other aspects of the case deemed necessary for a thorough evaluation.
  - Consultations may take place in person, via recorded video, or via live, virtual visit.
- This applies to every individual case.

These new requirements give action points to the language already outlined in our LIMA guidelines and closing paragraph.

Members found failing to follow these requirements are subject to Ethics Committee recommendations for education, suspension of membership, or revocation of certification.

To request supervision for e-collar use, please fill out this form (<https://iaabcfoundation.typeform.com/supervision>)

When making training and behavior modification decisions, trainers/consultants should understand and follow the Humane Hierarchy of Behavior Change – Procedures for Humane and Effective Practices (</about/position-statements/lima/hierarchy/>). <sup>6</sup>

[View Humane Hierarchy of Behavior Change \(/about/position-statements/lima/hierarchy/\)](/about/position-statements/lima/hierarchy/)

For these reasons, we, strongly support the humane and thoughtful application of LIMA protocols, and we applaud those individuals and organizations working with animals and humans within LIMA guidelines.

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*Here I get support, information and training on current, evidence-based knowledge. IAABC provides free webinars and content to earn member CEUs and also a lot of great stuff for further education like mentorships and online courses that I can highly recommend! A great community of international consultants offers great exchange on each relevant topic to support each others helping animals, their owners or even organisations that take care of animals of different species.*



**Sylvia Czarnecki**  
*Horse Behavior Consultant*

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