

Urine Marking - Dogs

Dogs that lift their leg or leave pee accidents all over the house is not only frustrating but the acids in dog urine can cause irreparable damage if not treated quickly.

Urine marking is a normal behavior in dogs, urine and feces contain pheromones and scents that your dog is using to communicate. There are several reason why your dog might be urine marking inside your home which could include territorial marking, fear, stress, and inadequate house training. You must identify the cause of your dog's behavior and begin treatment of the cause and use the following information to reduce urine marking in your home.

Why Dogs Urine Mark

One of the primary reasons that your dog is urinating in the home is inadequate house training. Dogs that are punished for having accidents in the home will often hide from their owners when relieving themselves. For this reason, it is very important that when you are housetraining your dog or puppy that you refrain from punishing your dog or even rubbing his nose in or near any accidents. If you are finding accidents in hidden areas of the home, there is a good possibility that this is the reason for your dog's accidents.

Another reason for urine marking in the home is stress. Stress can be caused by many things including separation from owners or other household pets, changes in the home such as moving or having a baby. Dog's that are stressed will usually mark items that belong to someone that they are bonded to such as clothing or on the person's bed. Any stressful event for dog's that mark due to stress can cause a relapse of such behavior.



Additional Resources

Please contact our Behavior Team to speak with a skilled behavior specialist.

BehaviorTeam@spca.org

214-461-5169

www.spca.org/petuniversity

Look for the following books online:

Way to Go! How to Housetrain a Dog of Any Age
by Patricia McConnell, PhD
and Karen London, PhD.

Territorial marking can happen for several reasons whether it is a dispute between household animals that you may or may not have recognized or because one animal perceives that there aren't enough resources in the household for them. This can cause dogs to mark items such as bedding, toys, water dishes, or areas in the home where the other dog has been.

How to reduce urine marking

After determining the cause of your dog's urine marking, it will take diligent efforts and consistency to reduce the behavior. The first step is to remove any previous urine stains and odors using an enzymatic cleaner specially formulated for removing pet stains. (see "[Cleaning Pet Stains and Odors](#)"). Once you have completely removed any urine stains and smells from the home the following steps will help reduce your dog's ability to urine mark in your house

- Spay or neuter your pet. Unaltered pets produce hormones that increase your dog's desire to mark. If your dog has already developed a habit of urine marking, simply spaying or neutering will not eliminate the issue but it may help to decrease it.
- Use a crate, baby gate, or exercise pen to keep your dog from soiling inside your house when you are unable to monitor him. Close off access to areas where your dog can hide from you using baby gates or closed doors.
- Take your dog outside on a regular schedule to potty (see "[Housetraining Your Adult Dog or Puppy](#)")
- Use belly bands for dog diapers.
- If you catch your dog about to mark, interrupt him with a sharp, happy tone and redirect him to something he enjoys such as petting or playing. If you think your dog needs to eliminate, and is not just marking, take your dog outside for a potty break.
- In some instances, you might find it helpful to place a potty pad if your dog always eliminates in the same place. This is not always a fail-proof as some dogs will choose another place to eliminate or they eliminate next to the potty pad. If your dog does use the potty pad in the problem area, after a consistent behavior has been established, you can begin moving the potty pad gradually away from that area and towards a more appropriate area such as a back yard or towards the door where you exit for your dog to go potty.

For dogs that are stressed or territorially marking:

- Provide more one on one attention to your dog by playing, petting, or training your dog. Take your dog for an extra walk or provide him with a special selection of toys that are only brought out when you play with him exclusively. Be sure to spend at least 30 minutes of your day with all of your attention focused on your dog. This time can be split into smaller bits as short as a few minutes at a time.
- Provide more beds, toys, blankets, water bowls, and resting spots for each of your dogs in your home.
- If you think that your dogs are having a dispute in the household, create a safe place for the dog that is having issues which may be a quiet room or a kennel in a quiet area of the home so that he can get away from the other pets in the house to rest.