

Behavior Solutions: House Soiling

If you have to tiptoe through your home as though it is a minefield of canine creation, your dog may have a house soiling problem. Even though a dog has been housetrained, he might eliminate in the home because of miscommunication in training, or reasons beyond his control. Determining the cause and then dealing with it in a patient manner is the most effective way to eliminate your dog's elimination problem.

Why Dogs House-Soil

A young puppy might eliminate in the house due to not yet being fully housetrained or not being able to hold much in his small bladder. Whereas a recently acquired adult dog that eliminates in the house may have never been fully housetrained and does not know the acceptable place in which to eliminate. If your dog has been reliable without a prior elimination problem suddenly displays them in the house, he may have a medical problem and should be taken to a vet to be examined. The older your dog gets, the more likely he is to develop physical problems, one of the most common being incontinence. Again, an examination by a vet can help you determine the cause and the best way to treat the condition.

If your dog has already eliminated in the house several times without being caught and corrected, he may think this is the appropriate place and will continue doing so. Even after thorough cleaning, the scent of the elimination may still be detectable to your dog's keen nose, so while you can't smell anything, your dog can and might react to it.

Unaltered males will often urinate as a marking behavior in adolescence and adulthood, or when a female in season is nearby. Though not as common, some females will urinate

as a marking behavior when they come into season. Your dog may also eliminate in the house from separation anxiety, submissiveness, and even excitement.

Medical Causes

When a dog that has had a flawless housetraining record suddenly begins eliminating in the house, the first thing to do is rule out a medical problem, such as a urinary tract infection, bladder stones, among others. An examination from your veterinarian can help determine if there is a physical cause, as well as what you can do for it. These conditions are typically only temporary and your dog will most likely return to his usual routine once he has recovered. If your dog does have an accident inside the house, be sure to thoroughly clean the area afterwards so he does not continue to mistake this as his elimination area.

Some medications, like certain steroids or antibiotics, will cause your dog to drink more and so need to urinate more frequently. Your vet can advise you on other medication options that are available to help him. Dogs will often develop problems with incontinence as they age. Medications are available that can help your senior dog regain better control over his functions. In the two latter situations, you may need to go back through housetraining and allow your dog the opportunity to eliminate more frequently than before. An indoor elimination area is a convenient option for those with busy schedules that are unable to make trips back home to let their dog out. For more information, refer to Starmark's "Behavior Solutions: Housetraining."

Marking Behaviors

Intact male dogs will often use their urine to lay claim to as many things as they can. While you probably don't mind your dog marking the oak tree in your yard with his signature scent, you don't appreciate it on your couch, doorways, leg, etc. Marking behavior is exhibited primarily in males and typically starts in adolescence or early adulthood. It is your dog's way of leaving his calling card to other dogs in the area, particularly females in season. Females will also display marking behavior while they are in season to alert males that she is available to breed. Most dogs will stop marking once they have been neutered or spayed.

If you do not plan to neuter or spay your dog, you will need to retrain him to break the habit. If you catch him marking in the house, use a shaker can or other noisy disruption to distract him. Then immediately take him outside to his designated elimination area. Never correct your dog after he has already eliminated in the house-- you must catch him in the act in order for any correction to be effective. When he eliminates in the appropriate area outside, reward him with a treat. For more information, refer to Starmark's "Behavior Solutions: Housetraining." You can also use the Pro-Training Clicker to help speed the process. Take your dog on leash to his designated elimination area outside, then click and reward him with a treat when he eliminates there. Get the free expanded guide with this and other obedience exercises online at www.starmarkacademy.com.

Anxiety, Submission, and Excitement

Though properly housetrained, some dogs may urinate while their owner is away due to anxiety. Separation anxiety is a behavioral condition that can cause a dog to become very stressed when left alone. Only your veterinarian or a behavior specialist can determine if your dog has true separation anxiety. Keep track of when your dog eliminates in the house-- if it only occurs while you are away, treatment by a professional should be sought. Help restore appropriate elimination habits by confining your dog to a crate or dog-proofed room with an elimination area while you are away. Make the confined area a comfortable place for your dog to spend time apart from you by providing him with a bed and mental stimulation toys, like the Everlasting Treat Ball. The Everlasting Treat Ball can help keep your dog's mind off being left alone and happily occupied for hours. For more information, refer to Starmark's "Behavior Solutions: Crate Training, Housetraining, and/or Separation Anxiety."

By nature dogs are pack animals, and as in any group situation there is a hierarchy in which someone has to be in the bottom rank. A submissive dog will show itself by cowering to the ground; putting his ears back; retracting or curling his lips; looking away and avoiding eye contact; and either tucking his tail under his body or wagging it fast and nervously. Some dogs will even urinate slightly as a show of submission to a higher ranking pack member. If your dog urinates when you greet him, or even if you just stand over him, it is his way of showing respect to you. Yelling or correcting your dog when he does this will tell him that his show of respect was not enough and may cause him to urinate more. Instead, ignore him when he urinates and build his confidence through obedience training with lots of praise and rewards. Teach your dog that sitting for a

greeting will result in praise and a reward, while his urination will be ignored. This exercise can be quickly taught with the Pro-Training Clicker. As soon as your dog sits, click and reward him with a treat. Submissive urination is not a reflection of housetraining.

Some dogs get so excited when greeting you or new people that they simply cannot hold their bladder. Excited urination is not the same as submissive urination, but can be dealt with in much the same way. When you arrive home, downplay your greeting to your dog and immediately let him outside to his elimination area, then praise and reward him when he eliminates there. Then when you allow him back inside the house, wait until he is calm to pay attention to him. You can also teach your dog that sitting to receive a greeting results in praise and a reward, while urinating does not. If visitors excite your dog, practice with a friend by having them come to your home and ignore your dog until he is calmly sitting. Then have your friend give your dog a treat and praise him in a calm voice. This exercise can be quickly taught with the Pro-Training Clicker. As soon as your dog sits, click and reward him with a treat. Like submissive urination, excited urination is not a reflection of housetraining.

Eliminating Inappropriate Elimination

In many instances, inappropriate elimination is a symptom of another issue that needs to be dealt with. At Starmark we believe that a well-behaved and well-trained dog is a happy dog and a better companion. Each dog is unique, and so is each owner. That's why we use a variety of techniques, customizing your dog's training experience to suit his

personality and your individual needs. Using our training techniques, which emphasize consistency and patience, you can solve your canine carpet catastrophes.

Trainer Developed: Academy Tested

The certified training and behavior specialists at Starmark Academy created this behavior solutions guide with you and your dog's needs in mind. Products mentioned in this guide are available at pet supply retailers, as well as online at our web site:

www.dogtrainingandboardingaustin.com. All products, guides and videos are tested and approved by the training directors of Starmark Academy, our accredited school for professional dog trainers. It is the hands-on experience of our training division, combined with the vast technical knowledge and experience of the Starmark Academy staff that allows us to bring you useful and unique dog training and behavior solutions. We train dogs just like yours every day; we work with pet enthusiasts just like you every day.

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