

Territorial Marking Behavior in Dogs

Marking behavior is *not* a house-soiling problem and both Male and Female dogs can display marking behaviors. To resolve the issue, you need to address the underlying reason for your dog's need to mark.

Your dog may be urine-marking if:

- The problem is primarily urination. Dogs and cats do mark with feces but it is not as common.
- Your dog isn't spayed or neutered. Both intact males and females are more likely to urine mark than are spayed or neutered animals.
- Your dog is not comfortable with other animals in or outside your home. When there is anxiety around territory, some dogs may feel a need to ward others away by urine-marking their territory. Even if your dog just sees or hears another animal through a door or window, he may feel a need to mark his territory.
- Your dog urinates frequently on neighborhood walks.

What You Can Do:

- Spay or neuter your dog as soon as possible. Spaying or neutering may significantly reduce urine marking. However, if your dog has developed a habit of urine marking over a long period of time, a pattern is probably already established. Changing this long-standing behavior will take time and patience.
- Resolve conflicts between animals in your home (call our Behavior Helpline for questions regarding this).
- Clean soiled areas thoroughly. Use enzyme-based pet urine removal products.
- Make previously soiled areas inaccessible or unattractive. If making soiled areas inaccessible or unattractive isn't possible, try to change the significance of those areas. Feed, treat and play with your dog in the areas he is inclined to mark.
- Keep objects likely to cause marking out of reach. Guests' belongings, new purchases and so forth, should be placed in a closet or cabinet.
- If your dog is marking in response to a new resident in your home (a new baby, roommate, spouse), have the new resident make friends by feeding, grooming and playing with your dog. Make sure good things happen to your dog when the new baby is around.
- Watch your dog at all times when he is indoors for signs that he is thinking about urinating. When he begins to urinate, interrupt him and take him outside, then praise him and give him a treat if he urinates outside. When you're unable to watch him, put your dog in confinement (a crate or small room where he has never marked) or tether him to you with a leash.

Tip: Belly Bands (similar to doggy diapers) can save your sanity while you're working to change your dog's marking behavior.

What Not To Do:

Don't punish your dog. Punishment is ineffective because your dog won't fully understand what it is you're attempting to do. Many become afraid or more anxious with any punishment and the marking behavior actually gets worse. Territorial marking is very normal behavior for animals so please call us for help with the problem.

Need help? Call our free pet behavior help line at (503) 416-2983.