

Canine House Soiling

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Elimination problems represent 10-20% of all behaviour problems in dogs. One, or a combination of the following may cause house-soiling:

- ineffective house training methods.
- territorial marking.
- separation anxiety.
- fear, excitement or supersubmission.
- too much food, inappropriate diet or compulsive eating or drinking.
- diseases like urinary tract infections, incontinence and gastroenteritis.
- early experience - puppies kept in a cage until 3-5 months of age and not allowed outside are difficult or impossible to house train.
- attention getting behaviour in older dogs.

When dealing with house-soiling, it is essential to establish a proper location for the dog to eliminate, and to totally prevent the dog from using an unwanted location. This means that you will have to keep the dog under close surveillance and observe his behaviour, so that he has no opportunity to eliminate in any location other than the one you have chosen for him.

Before training, you must ensure that the dog has no diseases (a common cause of urination in the house in older, previously well trained dogs), that the dog has normal stools, and that the dog is not over-eating (which may cause soft stools). Dogs with soft stool or diarrhea cannot be house trained until their bowel movements are firm.

Puppies can be house trained at a very young age. The length of time in hours that they have control is equal to their age in months plus one. For example, a 2-month-old pup has control for three hours. Most normal dogs can be house trained as adults.

Treatment for House Soiling:

1. **PREVENT ALL URINATION AND DEFECATION IN THE HOUSE.** The dog must not be allowed loose in the house, unless supervised directly. The dog may start to circle, sniff the ground, or simply appear restless before he eliminates. You should expect the dog to eliminate after resting or napping, 10 minutes after eating, after exercise or play, and when he smells a previously soiled area. You must be especially vigilant at these times. If the dog has an opportunity to mess in the house, you have not supervised him carefully enough.
2. **REWARD THE DOG FOR ELIMINATING IN THE APPROPRIATE LOCATION.** This means that you must take the dog outside, on a leash, to a convenient location whenever he needs

to eliminate. Place a small piece of stool in the selected area, as the smell will stimulate elimination. Praise the dog lavishly, within ½ second of the urination or defecation. If you think that he needs to eliminate and he doesn't, then watch him very carefully in the house, or confine him for 15 minutes and try again.

3. **TAKE OUTSIDE AFTER EATING, DRINKING AND EXERCISE.** Take the dog out first thing in the morning and last thing at night. Feed the dog 2 or 3 times a day, and take him out 10 minutes after eating. If your dog is used to being fed free-choice, you should start giving him meals so that you know when to expect him to eliminate.
4. **PUNISHMENT.** DO NOT punish the dog for house-soiling, but ignore the mistake and then take the dog outside and praise him for eliminating in the proper location. Any type of punishment (rubbing the dog's nose in it, hitting with a newspaper, etc) will not work. **Punishment would have to be administered within ½ a second of the event to be effective.** This is rarely, if ever, possible. Dogs that "look" guilty have learned that when you are present and a mess exists, they are in trouble. They do not associate urinating or defecating with being punished for it at a later time. They also cannot reason that if they don't make a mess in the future, they won't be punished. If someone who had never scolded your dog went into your home, and a mess was present, the dog would not look guilty. The "guilty" look only occurs when you and the mess are present.
5. **TREAT THE SOILED AREAS.** Despite how thoroughly you clean, the dog, with his superb sense of smell, can still smell where an elimination occurred. This odour can stimulate further eliminations at a specific previously soiled areas. You must therefore mask the odour after the area has been cleaned. If the soiled area is on a hard surface, wash it with a solution of 1 part Dettol mixed in 4 parts water or apply a few drops of oil of citronella (1/4 tsp / spot). These treatments must be repeated every 4 days for a month. If the dog soiled on the carpet, clean the area and then rub a small quantity of mothball crystals deep into the pile of the carpet. You should not be able to smell the mothballs when you walk into the room, but the dog will be able to smell it because his sense of smell is so acute. Reapply the mothball crystals every 5-7 days for a month. Do not clean with vinegar or ammonia, which may smell like urine to the dog.

Using this technique, house soiling problems are normally solved quickly. To be effective however, all phases of the program must be followed simultaneously and consistently.

We are here to help you in whatever way we can, so please call **613-634-7123**, if you have any problems or questions.