



URINE MARKING

Urine marking is a form of communication among dogs. Dogs are drawn to the strong-smelling marks of other dogs and are apparently able to discern information from them, such as the identity, sex and reproductive status of the marker. Males are more likely than females to urine mark, and reproductively intact males are more likely to mark than neutered males. However, intact females may mark prior to coming into and during estrous to advertise their availability. Both males and females will lift a rear leg to urine mark.

A dog who is marking generally deposits only a small amount of urine. Some will target only a few areas, such as prominent vertical objects or areas around exit doors and windows. Some dogs, however, mark everywhere! Some dogs will urine mark during walks, yet never mark inside the home. What prompts a dog to urine mark inside his own house? Typically, it is related to some perceived threat, such as an unfamiliar person or dog in the home, or the introduction of something new—anything from a new pet or baby to a new couch, suitcases and grocery bags. Sometimes even the odor of other animals on the owner’s shoes will spark marking. Conflict between pets within the home can also lead to urine marking. On rare occasions, a dog who marks frequently during walks may become highly aroused and continue the behavior upon returning home. Some dogs never mark in their own home, but will mark when they visit others’ homes.

WHAT TO DO:

- Your first line of defense? Neuter your male dogs and spay female dogs. Neutering male dogs successfully eliminates or greatly reduces household urine marking in about 50 percent of cases.
- Restrict your dog’s access to things that are likely to be marked, and do not allow other dogs to visit
- Get a “jock strap” or bellyband (also known as a male dog wrap) for your dog, so he can still mark but won’t soil the home. These can be ordered from pet supply companies.
- If your dog repeatedly marks specific objects (bags, suitcases, shoes, etc.), place treats under and around the objects. The objects will then become a source of food, rather than a “trigger” for marking.
- To discourage your dog from returning to already-marked areas, you’ll need to make them unpleasant. Use double-sided sticky tape, vinyl carpet runner turned upside-down to expose the knobby “feet,” or other types of booby traps in these areas. (Be advised that the dog may simply select another place, however.)
- Address conflicts between family pets. If one of your pets is a newcomer, you can re-introduce them by carefully following our instructions on introducing pets. If the pets have been together for some time and are suddenly not getting along, you will need to consult with a certified behaviorist or certified dog trainer to resolve the problem.

WHAT NOT TO DO:

- Do not scold your dog for urine marking. It rarely works, even when you catch him or her in the act.
- Do not prevent the dog from urine marking during walks. If anything, this may frustrate the dog and increase the likelihood of marking at home.