

Dog: House-Soiling



What Is House-Soiling

House-soiling is the term we use when a dog pees or poops indoors. House-soiling falls into these categories:

Lack of house training, Urine marking, Submissive urination, Excitement urination, Separation-related problems, Medical problems

Note: If your otherwise house-trained dog suddenly starts to go potty in the house, the first step should always be a visit to your veterinarian to rule out urinary tract infections or other medical conditions.

Lack of House Training

If you have a puppy, young dog, or newly adopted dog, accidents in the house don't count as house-soiling. In such cases, careful house-training is the cure. Remember, dogs don't see the logic in going potty outdoors; they have to be taught this is what we prefer. Even dogs that were previously completely house-trained can forget their training after the upheaval of changing homes.

If this is your dog, read our handouts *House-Training Your Puppy*, *House-Training Your Dog*, and *Crate Training Your Dog*.

Urine Marking

Marking, mostly in males, is when a dog lifts his leg and deposits a small amount of urine onto a vertical surface. Dogs mark for a number of reasons, for example because they are anxious, to communicate sexual status, to mark their territory, or to call attention to something new in the house.

Marking is most often seen in sexually mature intact male dogs, but both neutered males and intact and spayed females can sometimes mark. For more information read our handout *Marking*.

Submissive Urination

Submissive urination is a fear-related appeasement behavior that happens when a dog feels threatened. Your dog may be submissively urinating if it happens when he's greeted, petted, reached for, scolded, or has rolled over on his back. The body language to look for is cowering, ears held back, head held low, and rolling over. Read more in our handout *Submissive and Excitement Urination*.

Excitement Urination

Excitement urination most often happens during greetings and playtime, and isn't necessarily accompanied by submissive posturing. Your dog may have an excitement urination problem if he pees when he's excited, e.g. during greetings or playtime, or if your dog is less than one year old. Read more in our handout *Submissive and Excitement Urination*.

Separation-Related Problems

Dogs generally don't enjoy alone time. They can learn to be alone for moderate periods of time, but it doesn't come naturally and many dogs develop separation-related behavior problems, including anxiety-related emptying of bladder and bowels. In such cases, house-soiling can be a sign of full-blown separation anxiety, a serious canine anxiety disorder. Other symptoms to look for include excessive and/or distressed vocalization and destruction. Read more in our handout *Separation-Related Problems*. Also keep in mind how long your dog can hold it between potty breaks. Many time dogs urinate or defecate in the home because they have to go and don't have access. If you feel you have to leave your dog confined for longer than he can hold it – teach him to use potty pads.