

House Training



A new puppy:

Understanding the development of natural instincts in a puppy can help you to “tap into” the behaviour and use it to your advantage. House training is one of those areas.

Punishment will do more harm than good and is likely to make the puppy afraid to soil in your presence. Rubbing the dog’s nose in its own mess is unnecessary and ineffective. It is also damaging to the relationship when you punish your puppy for doing something it has not yet been taught is wrong.

Your puppy will need to relieve itself several times a day. When the urge is great, the location is of little concern.

If you continuously take the puppy to the desired location, the location becomes a part of the process. Praise the puppy for soiling in this area. Once the location becomes a part of the process, the urge to foul will automatically send the puppy to this area (or an area of the same or similar environment).

Establish a routine and watch for the signs like sniffing, unsettled behaviour, circling and simply looking agitated. Provide plenty of opportunity for the puppy to go to the desired area. Take the puppy to the site at crucial times like after a meal, when it wakes from sleeping, before it settles after play, etc.

Instinctively dogs do not want to soil in their own nest. The smaller you confine the area the less chance they will soil.

Put the puppy inside in a small crate overnight. This can be anywhere inside the house. First thing in the morning, take the puppy to the desired location. Reward and praise the puppy for soiling outside. Taking the puppy to this area is also likely to trigger the urge to soil.

Alternatively, overnight leave down some newspaper in case the urge is too great to wait until the morning. Place the newspaper near an entrance; this will at least encourage the puppy to head in the right direction.

If the puppy has an accident in the house and you catch him in the act, don’t make a big deal about it. This is simply part of raising a puppy. You can offer a correction by distracting him and taking him to the desired location. If you find a soiled area it is too late to offer any correction.

Clean up the mess using an enzyme based washing detergent. This helps to break down proteins and neutralise the odour. Avoid using ammonia based cleaners; these may resemble the smell of urine and trigger the puppy to soil in the area again.

TIP: If you use newspaper or a soil box, try to avoid high traffic areas, this is a personal activity, a little bit of privacy please. Also try to avoid areas where an appliance may suddenly kick in and give the puppy a fright; for example the spin cycle on a washing machine.

Correcting an adult dog:

If this behaviour is out of character further investigation should be initiated.

Medical condition. Physical problems, infection, disease or illness, parasite infection or an adverse effect from preservatives in the diet. Has the dogs diet recently been changed? Old age can cause poor bladder control.



Appeasement urination. If a dog senses that its owner is angry it may urinate to try and turn off the owner's aggression. This can be the result of too much or inappropriate discipline. This behaviour is not uncommon with dogs lacking confidence. An owner may become angry at his dog for urinating. However, in order to appease or switch off the owner's anger a dog may urinate more. For the dog's welfare, and our own, we need to try and understand what our dogs are trying to communicate.

Excitement urination. Getting a dog too worked up can cause a loss of bladder control.

Scent-marking. Dogs deposit urine and faeces to mark out their territory. A dog which feels that its territory is being invaded may start to scent-mark. Consider the following points;

- Have you introduced anything new lately, including items of furniture?
- Has a new dog moved into the neighbourhood?
- Are stray dogs roaming onto your property, perhaps in your absence?
- Have friends visited with a dog?

TIP: If you get an additional dog, introduce them on neutral ground. If you introduce them on your property the existing dog may see the new dog as an intruder and it may not get over the territorial issues.

Dominant behaviour. A dog which considers itself to be boss may wish to make it very clear where his territory is by scent marking.

Separation anxiety. This may result in many types of destructive behaviours and elimination disorders.

If you conclude that the behaviour is simply a lack of training the following method can be used;

Clean up the mess when the dog is not present. Place the dog's food bowl at the elimination site. Dogs appear uncomfortable about soiling and eating in the same place. If you catch the dog in the act of soiling inside, don't make a big fuss, firmly say "AH" and put the dog outdoors. Praise the dog for eliminating outdoors.