



## Urine Marking Behavior in Dogs

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Dogs are territorial animals and they mark their territory by depositing small amounts of urine to stake their property. In the wild, urine marking does not cause any problems, but in domestic situations dogs are punished for such behavior. Urine marking is not the same as a housetraining problem. The best housetrained dog in the world can still have problems with marking. If this is a new problem, take your dog to the vet to rule out an infection or bladder stones. If the cause is behavioral, there are steps you can take to help the problem.

### Symptoms of Marking

- Only a small amount of urine is deposited.
- The urine is often on vertical surfaces such as fences, walls, curtains or furniture. Leg lifting is also a sign of marking but this does not have to occur for it to be territorial marking.
- Males and females can mark. Intact females and males are more likely to mark but neutered pets will mark as well, especially if there is an intact animal in the house.
- Your dog frequently marks on walks.
- Your dog urinates on unfamiliar or new objects. This may include grocery bags, new furniture or items brought over by visitors.
- Your dog is around other animals outside the home. Dogs will often mark their fence if other dogs frequently pass by the area.

### What to Do

- Immediately have your pet spayed or neutered. Altered dogs are less likely to urine mark. The longer the dog is left unaltered, the longer it will take to stop the marking. If there are other animals in your home, have them neutered as well.
- Thoroughly clean any areas they have previously marked. Use an enzymatic cleaner and restrict access to the area until the treated area is dry.
- Change the significance of the marked area to the dog. Practice obedience in those areas or begin feeding the dog there.
- If your dog is reacting to a change in living conditions try to keep your dog on its old schedule. A major lifestyle change can make the dog more likely to mark.
- Watch your dog at all times. Do not allow him free reign of the house if he is marking indoors. He will never learn what he did wrong if he is punished after the fact. If you see your dog attempting to mark, make a loud noise to distract him. Redirect him to a more appropriate activity.
- Praise your dog when he goes to the bathroom outdoors. If he is marking the side of buildings or fences you will need to discourage the behavior and keep him on a leash with you. Do not allow him to mark on walks, either.
- Restrict your dog's access to windows and doors where they may see other animals. Use privacy slats in the fence to keep your dog from looking at other animals.
- Use the Nothing in Life is Free method to modify your dog's behavior. Establishing firm rules will take pressure off your dog. Make him work for petting, dinner and toys.

### It is Not Revenge

Dogs do not mark to get even with you or exact revenge. They are not like people; they do not get jealous. Dogs must do what they feel is necessary to claim their territory. They are not angry that you brought a new pet home, they are just reaffirming their position in the house. Be patient while working on your dog's behavior. They did not learn this behavior in a day and they won't lose it in a day. Consult a behaviorist for more individual help.