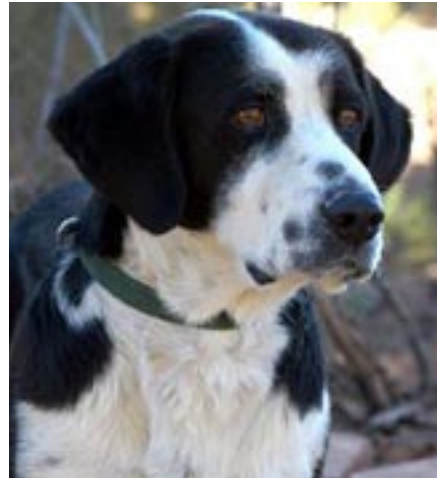


Urine Marking in Dogs

By Sherry Woodard

Why do dogs engage in urine marking?

Among dogs, urine marking is territorial behavior. An intact (uncastrated) male dog will instinctively mark his territory with his urine. A well-trained dog may not mark indoors in familiar surroundings, but as soon as he is moved to a new place, the behavior will resurface. Some female dogs are highly territorial and they will also urine-mark.



Dogs may feel threatened and consequently feel the need to mark their territory because:

- A new pet moves into your home.
- A new human baby comes home.
- A new adult starts spending time at your house.
- You move to a new place that may or may not have smells from other dogs.

What can I do to eliminate urine marking?

The best way to prevent a male dog from urine marking is to have him neutered before he develops territorial behavior. If the dog is an adult and the behavior is already well established, then neutering may not help. If your dog does urine-mark in your home, it's important to neutralize the spot with an enzymatic cleaner to completely get rid of the odor. Otherwise, the smell is an invitation to the dog to mark the same spot again. The enzymes in the cleaner (Nature's Miracle and Simple Solution are two brands) digest the odor-causing protein in organic materials.

Spots where marking has happened can be covered with two-sided sticky tape or vinyl carpet runners turned upside down. If the dog simply moves to marking another spot, you may want to limit what areas the dog has access to while you attempt to change the marking behavior through counterconditioning.

You can counter-condition by using one spot that your dog has marked – now clean – as a site to place food treats. Many dogs will not mark a place where they eat. If your dog has marked in several spots, you might want to cover the other spots with upside-down carpet runner or furniture. Your dog will need supervision while he's in the house and regular trips outdoors to urinate. Remember to praise your dog every time she eliminates in an appropriate place.

If your neutered dog is still marking after you have tried the above suggestions, seek professional help from a behaviorist in your area.

Sherry Woodard is the dog training and care consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.

See also: [House-Training Your Dog](#)