

## How to Eliminate the Marking Behavior (not emptying the bladder but leaving their "calling card" indoors)

First you must rule out physical problems. **A visit to your veterinarian is recommended.** It is critical to have a full medical workup performed on dogs suffering from marking or incontinence in order to rule out any underlying disease. Overproduction of urine may cause dogs to urinate voluntarily in the house, but they are not incontinent; however, they may be suffering from diabetes or kidney disease, both of which cause dogs to produce more urine than normal. Certain endocrine disorders and cancers can also cause dogs to produce increased amounts of dilute urine. In older or "*previously* housetrained" dogs, sudden changes in urinary habits may indicate a medical problem. It's best to have the dog checked by a veterinarian to rule this out. Once these problems are ruled out, the veterinarian will check for bacterial infection, and then do a physical exam to see if a structural problem is involved.

**CONGENITAL URINARY TRACT PROBLEMS:** In young female puppies, incontinence may also be a result of congenital urinary tract problems. Usually, the problem is anatomical, and the sphincter is unable to stop urine from leaking. A puppy that shows no signs of submissive behavior yet dribbles urine when walking or sleeping, may be afflicted with this disorder. Another sign is urine scalding and irritation around the vulva, or vaginitis.

Once health related problems have been ruled out or treated and blood tests are negative, there's a good chance the problem is behavioral.

**WHY DOGS MARK?** Marking can be compared to "graffiti." The dog leaves his personal signature ("calling card" - "I have been here"), by urinating on walls, furniture and other objects. Marking is a species-specific trait of the dog and is very resistant to extinction or counter-conditioning. There are several theories as to why male dogs mark, the most unlikely being that their bladders are full. A few of the theories speculate that the dog intends to outline his territory, cover up competing scents or leave a scent for his own pleasure. Although we do not know

exactly why an otherwise well-house-trained dog places his personalized signature on furniture, walls and other objects, there are several specific patterns involved with marking. These patterns can help you to either significantly reduce the frequency of the behavior or eliminate it. Often, dogs do not mark in the house while in the presence of their owners. They do tend to mark in the same areas that they do not frequent regularly such as a spare bedroom, formal dining room or an off-limits couch. They usually do not mark the areas where they sleep, eat, rest or spend the majority of their time. Because intact males are more likely to mark in the house than neutered males, neutering has had a high success rate in curbing marking behavior although, not always successful.

The age at which the dog is neutered may play a contributory factor. They will return to the spots previously used or where another dog has eliminated. If the marked spot is not cleaned up properly the dog will be attracted to the spot and will mark again. Therefore, anytime a new dog enters the household or visits, marking may start or recur. Even a dog that has never marked before may be enticed to do so by a new dog's odor. The only way to eliminate marking behavior is to clean up the area properly, prevent the behavior and catch the dog in the act ~ *not by punishment!*

### **HOW TO ELIMINATE MARKING DURING THE RETRAINING PROCESS:**

There is a solution to eliminating marking using a three-prong approach - (1) management 101, (2) "Nothing in life is free", reinforcement and (3) "the wrap." **However, the success of retraining is directly proportionate to your commitment to following through in all three areas consistently.**

**MANAGEMENT 101:** Careful monitoring, environmental controls and neutering can curtail a male dog's attraction for territorial marking. You must watch your dog very carefully, and when you cannot watch him, he should be either outside where it is acceptable to mark or in the crate. Every time your dog marks and is not caught, he learns that marking is acceptable. Don't allow the dog to be free without supervision for even a moment. He should be "attached" to someone in the house for the next month. Other wise the dog should be in a crate or put outside if he has a kennel. When in the house, car, or crate the dog should also be wearing the "wrap."

**THE WRAP:** When your dog is in the house, vehicle or crate make sure he is fashionably wearing "the wrap." How to make the wrap? Take a small towel and cut

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it lengthwise in half. Then wrap the towel or "tube sock" around the dog's waist/groin area once or twice if you can. Use vet wrap to secure the "wrap" around the dog's middle, covering the sheath/penis. *VET Wrap* sticks to its self, works well; and is inexpensive. It can be bought through a vet or any tack/horse shop. Some good wraps are available at local dog stores; easy to use, wash and reuse.

It is important, the wrap is only removed when the dog is any place where it is appropriate for him to urinate and only take the wrap off when dog needs to relieve himself. If he does mark with the wrap in place, he will soon realize that he isn't getting anywhere, and is only peeing on himself. Allow the dog to "live" with soiled wrap for a little while, then wash and reapply. Several "wraps" may be necessary to begin to modify this unwanted "marking behavior."

**NOTHING IN LIFE IS FREE:** or "No Free Lunch" and should be combined with exercise. Using the Buster Cube® (food cube) give the dog "breakfast" in the Buster Cube®. The Buster Cube® takes the dog's energy and helps to eliminate boredom. Additionally, it challenges the dog to think and "work for food." Be sure to reinforce good urination outdoors with treats and praise. Use games for reinforcement and cooperation such as retrieving, training behaviors, tricks, obedience, etc. Be sure to play games that exercise and reinforces cooperation.