

CANINE BARKING

Why do dogs bark?

Barking is one of the most common complaints of dog owners and their neighbours! However, barking is a natural behaviour. It serves as a territorial warning signal to other dogs and family members. Dogs may vocalize when separated from their family members, and also occurs during times of indecision, anxiety, or frustration. Medical problems can also contribute to vocalization, especially in older dogs.

How can barking problems be prevented?

Socialization and **habituation** — get puppies used to as many new people, animals, situations and noises as possible. This will minimize the amount or intensity of alarm barking. Barking should only be allowed to alert owners and should be stopped before the dog becomes agitated and out of control.

My dog constantly barks. What does she want?

Barking can be an attention seeking behaviour that can become problematic. This behaviour is often reinforced by owners ‘giving in’ to their dog’s demands. We will often allow a barking dog indoors, feed them the cookie they want, and pet or talk to them because it seems to quiet them down. These are just a few examples of how an owner may unknowingly be reinforcing barking. Just walking over to see why your dog is barking may encourage the behaviour. Never reward barking with any type of attention.

How can I train my dog to be ‘quiet’?

Training the dog to understand a “quiet” command is an invaluable tool for controlling undesirable barking. One of the most practical techniques for teaching a dog to stop barking on command, is to first be able to get the dog to bark on cue. Use something that will get the dog to bark and pair it with the word “bark” or “speak’. Numerous repetitions allow the dog to associate the word “bark” or “speak” with the action. Dogs that bark on command can then be taught to turn off the barking by removing the cue that made the dog bark in the first place, and by adding a “hush” or “quiet” word just before the barking subsides. As soon as your dog is quiet, give a favourite treat or reward.

It can be difficult or impractical to teach a dog to be “quiet” on command if the barking cannot be predicted or “turned on” or if it is too intense.

Alternately, distractions can be used to disrupt barking. Using a Pet Corrector, or an empty soda can into which you’ve placed a dozen or so pennies, make effective noises that will momentarily stop your dog from barking. The quiet behaviour must then be instantly reinforced by giving the dog a preferred treat, and then encouraging the dog to follow you away from the place or thing that caused him to bark in the first place.

What are my chances of correcting my dog’s barking problem?

Usually, most barking problems can be drastically improved with appropriate and consistent training. But the household situation may make it difficult to correct a barking problem completely. When trying to resolve barking problems, it is important to know what is making the dog bark. Some dogs are so reactive and bark for so many reasons that it will be difficult to stop the barking entirely. It will take time to implement the correction training, and depending on the frequency of barking episodes, it will take time to resolve the problem, or to at least improve the situation.

What can I do to correct my dog’s barking problem?

The training program must be based on the type of problem, your household, the urgency of the situation, and the type and level of control that you require. A good behavioural history is important to determine the cause, the motivation and to figure out what may be reinforcing the barking behaviour. Training plans need to incorporate the following:

- 1)** Ensure that your dog is not being rewarded inadvertently. Some owners actually encourage the barking unknowingly by giving attention, or rewards in their efforts to quiet the barking.
- 2)** Sometimes the home environment can be modified to help the dog stay away from the situations (sounds and sights) that cause barking. Exposure might be minimized by confining the dog to a crate, or to a room away from doors and windows, or by covering windows so that the dog cannot see outside. Privacy fencing may be helpful for dogs that bark when they’re outdoors. Also, by taking the dog outside on leash and staying with your dog while he is outside may help curb barking behaviour. If your dog is barking at doorbells, disconnect it, or at least cover it so it isn’t used when people arrive at your home. If the telephone ringing sets your dog off, turning the volume down, or off, and changing the ringtone during the training phase may also be helpful.
- 3)** Increasing interactive play periods and exercise, crate and confinement training, halter training and taking an obedience class may speed up the training program by using up some of the dog’s energy, setting limits and establishing routine, and by establishing good communication and obedience to basic commands.
- 4)** Once you have sufficient control and the dog is responding to basic obedience, it should be possible to train your dog to stop barking on command. Training the dog to stop barking can be accomplished with lure reward techniques, distraction techniques, or with halter and leash training. Regardless of the technique, rewards should be given

as soon as the barking stops, so that the dog learns that quiet behaviour earns rewards. It is most important to associate SILENCE with the command used. Over time the dog should be required to stay quiet for progressively longer periods of time, before being rewarded.

5) Once the owner has sufficient control with training and the quiet command, it may then be possible to begin the retraining program in the situations that lead to the dog barking. Start with the situations or things that cause mild barking and work up to the things and situations that cause the most barking and worst reactions. Training must be consistent with clear and predictable rewards and consequences.

6) Pets that are barking for other reasons, such as fear, separation anxiety, or because of compulsive disorders, will require treatment for the underlying problem, in conjunction with the training program.

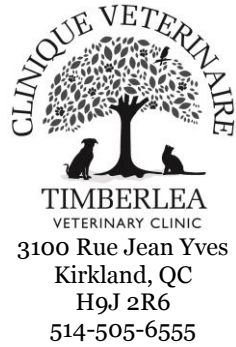
What anti-barking devices are there and are they effective?

Owner-Activated Products:

These products are most useful for getting the pet's attention during 'quiet' command training. Ultrasonic devices, audible devices, water sprayers, or a shake can (an empty soda can with a few coins sealed inside) are often successful. However, without a concurrent training program and an owner that has gained good control of their dog, all of these devices may start to be ignored by the dog.

Bark-Activated Products:

When barking occurs in the owner's absence, bark activated products (in conjunction with environmental modification and retraining) are often the most practical way of deterring inappropriate barking. Bark-activated products may also be a better choice than owner-activated devices, since they ensure immediate and accurate timing. It is important to note however, that bark collars only work when they are on the dog. Most dogs quickly learn to distinguish when the collar is on and when it is off. When they are not wearing the collar, most dogs will bark. There are off-collar devices that are useful for training the dog to stop barking in selected areas, such as near doorways or windows, or for dogs that bark only when they're in specific areas/places. The benefit of off-collar devices is the dog won't figure out where the 'correction' is coming from, as they would with a bark collar.



CONTROLLING PULLING, LUNGING, CHASING, & JUMPING UP

Why do dogs tend to pull, chase and forge ahead?

Dogs tend to pull ahead and lunge forward for a number of reasons. Dogs that are playful, or investigative pull their owners down the street as they check-out their environment, or when they are attracted towards something they find appealing, such as squirrels and birds, children running and playing, or other dogs. As you pull backwards in an attempt to restrain your dog, he/she resists further by pulling forward even more, since most dogs tend to push against pressure.

Dogs that are aggressive towards other dogs, people, children etc. and those that have the urge to chase, e.g. joggers, cyclists, are likely to pull ahead in an attempt to chase. In addition, dogs that are restricted or restrained by a leash may be more likely to exhibit defensive aggression. Dogs that are fearful or otherwise reluctant to leave home may be pulling and forging ahead on their way back home.

How can pulling and forging ahead be controlled?

It is a shame when owners are unable to enjoy walking with their dog due to extreme leash pulling. The dog should be taught through obedience training, to assume an appropriate walking position.

Training should begin in an environment where success can be ensured. Using either a leash and collar, or a leash and head halter (Gentle Leader or Halti), and very motivating rewards, the dog should first be taught to walk at the owner's side. During the first few training sessions distractions should be avoided so that the rewards and motivation keep the dog's interest and attention. If the dog begins to pull ahead, give a quick tug on the collar and take 2-3 quick steps backwards.

It is best to start with a few steps at a time, and reward, to keep your dog in the correct position, rather than trying to accomplish a long walk, and be constantly having to correct the dog for being in the wrong position.

As the dog learns *where* to be in relation to the owner, gradually walk a little further before rewarding. Set the dog up to succeed. This can often be accomplished using a food reward to help motivate the dog stay with you.

A head halter is one of the best means of gaining immediate control. When the dog is wearing a head halter and pulls ahead, when your dog pulls on the leash, the pressure will cause the dog to back up and for his head to turn toward you. Encourage your dog to sit at this time and offer praise and/or a reward. Although the dog could be made to sit each time it pulls forward, in the long run, the goal is to have the dog back

up every time he forges ahead and puts any pressure on the end of the leash. We are looking for the dog to back up just far enough that he gets back into position at your side. In short, your dog will learn that pulling leads to tension on his head/neck, while walking at your side earns him a slack leash and rewards.

Once you have the dog successfully heeling in the yard with no distractions, you can proceed to the front yard and the street while there are still no distractions. With time and practice, and strong motivators, the dog can then gradually be walked in the presence of distractions.

Another solution to pulling is to use a “no pull” harness. This type of harness fits around the dog’s body and around the forelegs so that when the dog forges ahead the forelegs and body can be controlled. Although these harnesses do not provide the level of control afforded by a good training program, it will reduce the intensity with which the dog pulls and may allow you to be able to walk a dog without the danger of him making you slip and fall on an icy street, or the worry of your dog getting away from you because he may pull the leash right out of your hand.

My dog chases and I am worried he will get hurt. What can I do?

Chasing and running after prey, nipping at people’s heels and herding children are instinctual dog behaviours. These behaviours are more strongly motivated in some breeds of dogs than others. Some dogs may be motivated to chase intruders (people, or dogs) from their property. This behaviour is reinforced each and every time the dog successfully ‘chases the intruder’ away (when the person, or other dog simply passes your property line and continues on their way), and becomes very rewarding to a dog.

In order to control chase behaviours, it is necessary to train the dog to do something **instead** of chasing. Yelling “no” and physically punishing a dog will not stop this behaviour and may even cause the dog to become anxious and/or fearful about people or other dogs approaching the property which in turn could lead to an **INCREASE** in the intensity of the ‘chasing’ behaviour being exhibited.

First, let’s talk about preventing chasing behaviours. As soon as you notice your young dog engaging in any inappropriate chasing game, it is the time to start training. Get a leash on the dog and practice some stay exercises. Then present the dog with a situation in which it would normally start to ‘play the chase game’ and reward the dog for maintaining a sit or down stay. Your dog must always be on a leash during training sessions and ANY TIME he may be exposed to situations that cause him to want to ‘chase’. The leash is important so that you can retain control of the situation and correct unwanted behaviours. A dog knows when it is off leash may very quickly revert to its previous chasing behaviours.

If the dog has been allowed to engage in chasing behaviours for some time, it will be more difficult to stop it. A program of desensitization and counter-conditioning is needed to correct the problem. This consists of teaching the dog to sit (or lie down) and stay, while gradually introducing the things that the dog chases. It will be necessary to first start with objects the dog is less likely to chase and progress to more tempting items. If the problem is severe, a consultation with a behaviourist may be necessary.

My dog charges the door and jumps on people who enter my home. What can I do?

Another behaviour that causes problems for owners is door charging. Door charging is the behaviour of the dog speeding to the door whenever anyone knocks or rings the bell. To deal with this problem, start by teaching the dog to sit and stay for a food reward near the door (6-10 feet away). Gradually phase out food treats when the behaviour is learned and can be reliably repeated. Next you may need to practice with family members entering the home. Have the dog in a sit stay, and ask family members to enter via the door. Reward the dog when he maintains his sit stay. Make sure have your dog go back and sit and stay every time he tries to leave his spot. Finally, when the dog has mastered the task with people he knows, practice with visitors, keeping the dog on leash so you can maintain control and can make him sit and stay should he try to get up. Your dog should always sit before it gets petting and attention. This will go a long way in preventing jumping behaviour and remember, if your dog always has to sit and stay when the doorbell rings, he cannot be charging the front door.

NOTE: ***If door charging behaviour is coupled with aggression, you should seek the help of a professional immediately and the dog should be put somewhere safe (in a crate or locked in a room) when you have visitors.***

How can I prevent my dog from jumping on me or on other people?

For many dogs, jumping up on people is part of their greeting routine. Often, owners try to discourage this behaviour using methods such as squeezing the front feet, stepping on the dog's toes, or kneeling the dog in the chest. If you've tried any of these methods, and your dog is still jumping on you, let's look at the motivation for the jumping behaviour. Usually, dog jump up to greet people. Many dogs like to greet "face to face", like they do with their canine counterparts. People, however, mostly do not think a dog with wet muddy feet jumping up on them and their clean clothes, enjoyable.

The best method to curb jumping behaviour is to teach the dog an appropriate greeting posture. This usually is a sit/stay, which can then be rewarded with food and attention. Once the dog has perfected this behaviour with family members, the dog is ready to try with visitors. Make the dog sit and stay while people come in and have them hand the dog a treat. If the dog gets up, put him back in the sit/stay position and try again.

Another way to train this behaviour is to have visitors come to your home. Have the first person come to the door and instruct your dog to sit and stay. Then, let your visitor in. Hopefully with some effort you will get your dog to continue to sit. Have the person enter, give your dog a treat and then have them sit down on a couch or at the kitchen table. After 5 minutes, have the person leave from the back door, come to the front and enter again. This second entry should be easier as your dog will have just seen the person. If you can repeat this exercise 4-5 times for each visitor that comes to your home, the dog will have plenty of opportunity to learn the new task.

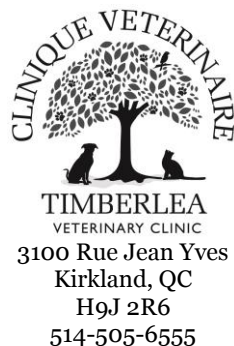
If your training program seems not to be progressing or working well, remember, if the dog succeeds in getting any attention for the jumping behaviour, then the dog will continue to jump. Attention may be petting, pushing away (which resembles play behaviour), or even mild reprimands. Do not give your dog any attention for jumping on you, and make sure visitors, do the same. Re-position the dog back into the sit/stay

position with his leash and collar only and do not talk to your dog while you're doing it. To extinguish jumping behaviour you need to remove ALL reinforcement. This may mean that you do not look, speak, touch or interact with the dog IN ANY WAY when it jumps on you.

To use punishment for jumping up, you need to be able to QUICKLY AND HUMANELY interrupt the behaviour. This is often best done with some type of device that makes a loud noise. Shake cans, and air horns, all make loud noises that will often startle the dog. As soon as the dog hesitates, you need to give the dog an alternative command so that the dog can do the proper thing and then reward the dog with praise. So, as soon as you make the noise, and see the moment of hesitation from your dog, you say "SIT" and when the dog sits you reward it with praise and/or treats. Many dogs soon learn that to avoid the noise, they need to sit and will do so to greet you.

Another method that is consistently successful at deterring and preventing jumping up, is to leave a leash and collar on the dog during greeting. All it takes is preventatively stepping on the leash (leaving on enough leash for the dog to comfortably sit) or give a quick sharp tug to prevent or disrupt the jumping. Again, be certain to reward non-jumping behaviour profusely.

Some people like to allow the dog to jump up on them at certain times. You must never allow the dog to choose the time. Ideally you should teach your dog to jump up on command such as "give me a hug" or "come up here". This way, you have the behaviour under verbal control and you decide when the dog will be allowed to jump up.



COPROPHAGIA IN DOGS (STOOL EATING)

Why do dogs eat stools?

While most cases of coprophagia appear to be purely behavioural, there are indeed numerous medical problems that can cause or contribute to coprophagia. These problems must first be ruled out before a purely behavioural diagnosis can be made.

What are some of the medical causes?

Any medical problem that leads to a decrease in absorption of nutrients, causes gastrointestinal upset or causes an increase in hunger, could lead to coprophagia. In addition to a complete physical examination, the puppy or dog's diet and its stool frequency and consistency should be evaluated. Fecal testing for parasites would be a good place to start. If the stool is unusually soft, additional fecal and/or blood tests may

be recommended. Feeding an inappropriate diet, and underfeeding your dog, could lead to malnutrition, vitamin and mineral deficiencies and therefore an increased appetite, which could lead the dog to eating stool. In addition, if the stool contains large amounts of undigested food material, there is an increased likelihood that the dog or puppy would eat his stool.

When adult dogs begin to eat stools (a new behavior that never occurred during puppyhood), it may also be due to malabsorption of nutrients or nutritional deficiencies. In addition, any condition that might cause an increase in appetite or an unusual appetite, such as diabetes, Cushing's disease, thyroid disease, or treatment with certain drugs such as steroids, may lead to an increase in stool eating. Some dogs that have been placed on a highly restrictive or poorly balanced diet may also begin to eat their stool. It should also be noted that if a dog develops a taste for a particular dog's stool, that dog should be tested for any type of condition that might lead to poor digestion of the food (and therefore excessive food elements remaining in the stool).

What are some of the behavior reasons that a dog might eat its own stool?

Coprophagia is a common problem in some puppies, which usually clears up by adulthood. There have been many explanations suggested for this behavior. When left unsupervised, puppies may simply begin to investigate, play with, and even eat stools. Since coprophagia may attract a great deal of owner attention, the behavior may be further reinforced. There may also be an observational component (copy behaviour) since the bitch cleans and ingests the puppy's excrement in the nest, and puppies may learn to mimic the behavior of their mother or playmates who perform this behavior. The owner that uses the outmoded, inhumane and useless training technique of "sticking the dog's nose" in its stool when it has soiled the home, may be further encouraging coprophagia. Early intervention can help reduce the possibility that the behavior will become a long-term habit.

Why do dogs eat the stools of other animals?

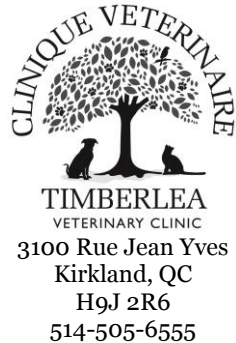
This behavior is akin to scavenging. It is not unusual for dogs to steal food items, raid garbage cans, and chew on, or eat non-food items that most humans would consider unusual or even disgusting. Cat feces and those of some other animals often have enough appealing attributes (odor, texture, taste), to overcome the fact that they are stools. In fact, stools themselves are seldom unpleasant to dogs. It is one of the odors that they are constantly attracted to when investigating their environment.

How can coprophagia be treated?

Coprophagia can be corrected by preventing access to stool, by thorough cleaning of the pet's property, and by constant supervision when the pet is outdoors. At the first indication of stool sniffing or investigation the dog should be interrupted with a firm 'no' command, and a quick pull on the leash. If the dog is taught to come to the owners and sit for a special food treat immediately following each elimination, the new behavior may become a permanent habit.

Dogs with medical problems should be treated to try and correct the underlying cause. A change in diet to one that is more digestible, or one with different protein sources may be useful. Dogs on restricted calorie diets may do better on a high bulk or

high fiber formula. Some dogs may be improved by adding enzyme supplements to improve nutrient digestion or absorption. There are powders available at the clinic that can be added to food to help reduce the incidence of coprophagia by imparting the stool with a noxious taste. The yard must first be cleaned up, so that all the stools will be 'treated' and will therefore be distasteful to your dog.



DESTRUCTIVENESS: CHEWING

Why do dogs chew?

Dogs, especially puppies are extremely playful. While play with people and other dogs is an important part of socialization and social development, exploration and object play are important ways for dogs to learn about their environment. Therefore it is a normal behaviour for puppies to investigate their environment by sniffing, tasting and chewing on objects in and around the home. Dogs that chew may also be scavenging for food (garbage raiding), playing (the dog that chews apart a book or couch), teething (dogs 3 to 6 months of age that are constantly chewing on things), or satisfying a natural urge to chew and gnaw (which may help to keep teeth and gums healthy). Chewing and destructive behaviours may also be a response to anxiety. Dogs that are confined in areas where they are insecure may dig and chew in an attempt to escape. Dogs that are anxious, such as with separation anxiety, may turn to chewing and other forms of destructiveness as an outlet for their anxiousness.

How can chewing be stopped?

First, determine why the dog is chewing things. If the dog is a puppy or young adult dog that is chewing at a variety of objects in and around the house, it is likely that play and investigation (and perhaps teething) is the motive. Dogs that raid the garbage cans and steal food off counters are obviously motivated by the presence and odour of food. Some dogs are attempting to escape confinement while for others, chewing may be an outlet for anxiety. Determining the cause and motivation for chewing is therefore essential in the development of a treatment strategy. Directing the chewing towards appealing alternatives (safe chew toys for dogs), making sure the dog has sufficient play and exercise, and prevention of inappropriate chewing are all needed for the exploratory dog or puppy.

If the dog is a puppy, this chewing behaviour may decrease naturally with time, provided you direct the chewing towards proper objects. Dogs that are raiding the garbage or stealing food items need to be treated with supervision, and owners need to ensure that all garbage cans are out of reach and that no food is left in areas the dog can reach, as the behaviour is self-rewarding.

Dogs that are destructive because they are trying to escape confinement must learn to become comfortable and secure with the cage or room where they are to be confined. Alternatively a new confinement area may have to be chosen.

Dogs that are destructive as an outlet for anxiety will need to have the cause of the anxiety diagnosed, and the problem appropriately treated.

How can proper chewing be encouraged?

Instead of considering how inappropriate chewing might be discouraged, first consider if you have provided safe chewing alternatives for your dog's chewing needs.

Begin with a few toys with a variety of tastes, odours, and textures to determine what appeals most to the pet. Although plastic, nylon or rubber toys may be the most durable, products that can be torn apart such as rawhides may be more like the natural prey and wood products that attract most dogs. Coating toys with liver or cheese spread or peanut butter may also increase their desirability. The Kong™ is a durable chew toy, but its appeal can be greatly enhanced by placing a piece of cheese or liver inside and then filling it tight with biscuits. Placing liquid items or food into the Kong and freezing it may provide your dog with a chewable treat that lasts a little longer.

There are countless dog toys available that you can stuff food or treats into, so that your dog has to “work” to get its reward. To ensure that your puppy is encouraged and rewarded for chewing on his toys, and discouraged from chewing on all other objects, he must be supervised at all times. Whenever supervision is not possible, you must prevent access to any objects or areas that might be chewed. Although play periods and chew toys may be sufficient for most pets, additional activities such as self-feeders, interactive toys, and even videos may help to keep dogs occupied.

How else can my dog's chewing activity be reduced?

The needs of most dogs are usually satisfied with daily obedience sessions and play sessions. Games such as tug-of-war, retrieving, catching a ball or Frisbee, jogging, or even long walks allow the dog an opportunity to expend unused energy, and provide your dog with time they get to spend with you where they have your attention. Obedience training, agility classes and simply teaching your dog a few tricks are not only pleasant interactive activities for you and your dog, but they also provide some stimulation and “work” to the dog's daily schedule.

How can I stop the chewing on household objects?

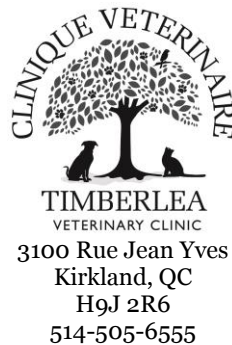
Access to all objects that the dog might chew must be removed unless the owner is present to supervise. Your dog can only be punished for chewing if it is caught in the act. Even then, punishment must be humane, immediate and effective. A shake can, verbal reprimand, or alarm (audible or ultrasonic) can deter the pet in your presence, but the behaviour will continue in your absence. Remote punishment (where the owner is out of sight while administering punishment) may teach the dog that the behaviour itself is inappropriate. However, none of these methods are practical when the owner is

absent or cannot supervise. Arriving home and punishing a pet for an act that has already occurred will only serve to increase your pet's anxiety.

The only way to curb chewing that happens in your absence is to find the right kind of deterrent. To be successful the deterrent must be noxious enough to immediately deter the pet. Taste or odour aversion is often the type of 'trap' to use, but many pets will have to be conditioned in advance to detest the smell or taste of anti-chew spray ahead of time. Ideally, your dog should be confined in your absence, so that he does not get the opportunity to chew inappropriately, until you are convinced he understands the 'house rules'.

What if the dog continues to chew household objects?

Whenever you cannot supervise or monitor your dog's behaviour, he or she should be confined to a cage or dog-proof room with any potential chewing sites effectively off limits. Alternatively, a dog can be trained to wear a basket type muzzle which can be used when you leave your dog alone or unsupervised for short periods of time.



HOUSE-SOILING: ELIMINATION PROBLEMS IN DOGS

Why is my dog soiling the house?

There are numerous reasons that a dog might soil the house with urine and/or stools. Determining the specific reason is essential for developing a treatment program. Dogs that soil the home continuously or intermittently from the time they were first obtained may not have been properly house-trained.

Dogs that have been previously house-trained may begin to soil the home for medical reasons or behavioral reasons. Assuming medical causes can be ruled out (see below), some of the behavioral causes can be a change in owner schedule, a change in housing or any change in the pet's home that might lead to anxiety. For example, if you leave the dog alone for longer than the dog is accustomed, or significantly change the daily schedule or routine, your dog may begin to house-soil. Dogs that are exhibiting an increase in anxiety may begin to eliminate in the home, due primarily to a loss of control when anxious and not due to spite. Dogs that exhibit separation anxiety may soil the home, and require an intensive retraining program.

Why am I finding urine on upright objects?

Marking is when male dogs urinate on upright objects. It is most likely to occur on or near other odours, especially the urine left by other dogs. The volume of urine is usually small. The problem is much more common in intact males, but some neutered males and spayed females will mark. Dogs may mark territory for a number of reasons including male hormonal influences, other dogs entering the property, moving to a new household or getting new furniture, or as a response to increased stress or anxiety.

Why does my dog urinate when he meets new people or I come home?

Two specific types of house-soiling, submissive and excitement urination, differ from most other forms of house-soiling in that the dog has little control over its elimination. Submissive urination occurs when a person approaches, reaches out, stands over or greets a dog 'too enthusiastically'. The dog not only urinates but may show other signs of submission such as ears back, retraction of lips, avoidance of eye contact, cowering and/or rolling onto his back. Although this problem can be seen in dogs of any age, submissive urination is most commonly seen in puppies and young dogs. Owner intervention in the form of verbal reprimands or punishment, only serves to aggravate the problem by making the dog act more submissively which leads to further submissive urination. Excitement urination is similar to submissive urination except the stimulus that leads to elimination are those that lead to excitement, particularly greeting and giving affection to the dog. These dogs may also be overly submissive, but not necessarily. Ignoring the dog for the first minute or two when you enter the house, low key greetings, avoiding eye contact with the dog and being careful not to intimidate your dog with your body language will go a long way to helping with this problem.

What medical problems could cause my dog to house-soil?

There are numerous medical problems that could cause or contribute to house-soiling, and these become increasingly more common as the dog ages. Medical problems that cause an increased frequency of urination such as bladder infections, bladder stones or crystals, or bladder tumours, those that cause a decrease in control or mobility such as neurological deterioration or arthritis, and those that cause an increase in urine volume (amount) such as kidney disease, liver disease, diabetes, or Cushing's disease could all contribute to indoor elimination.

Certain drugs such as steroids may also cause a dog to drink more and therefore urinate more. For dogs that defecate in the house, any condition that leads to more frequent defecation such as colitis, those that cause an increased volume of stool such as problems with absorption or lack of digestive enzymes, and those that affect the dog's mobility or control such as arthritis or neurological deterioration must be ruled out. As dogs age, cognitive brain function declines, and this could also contribute to indoor elimination.

How can the cause of house-soiling be determined?

For dogs that are house-soiling, a physical examination and medical history are first required. For most cases a urinalysis and general blood profile will also be needed, and additional tests such as radiographs, may be indicated based on urinalysis results.

If there is any abnormality in elimination frequency or amount, stool colour or consistency or urine odour, more comprehensive laboratory tests may be necessary.

Once medical problems have been ruled out, it will then be necessary to determine if your dog was ever completely house-trained, whether there were changes in the pet's household or schedule at the time the problem started, whether the dog is marking or eliminating on horizontal surfaces, whether or not the pet is exhibiting anxiety when the owners leave or when it is locked in a confined area, and whether there is any evidence of submissive or excitement urination.

How can house-soiling be treated?

Training techniques for house-soiling dogs are virtually identical to those needed to housetrain a new puppy. However, even if house-soiling dogs are retrained to eliminate outdoors, indoor sites may continue to be used, since the odour, substrate, and learned habit may continue to attract the dog back to the location. In addition, dogs that eliminate indoors are in essence, performing a self-rewarding behaviour since they relieve themselves and do not perceive that the area they have used is inappropriate. The key to effective housetraining is constant supervision. Prevent access to indoor

elimination sites. Correct the pet if it is eliminating in an inappropriate location (except in cases of submissive/excitement urination). Redirect the dog to appropriate areas at times when elimination is necessary. Reinforce the acceptable behaviour with lavish praise or food rewards. If a word cue is used prior to each elimination-reward sequence, the dog may soon learn to eliminate on command. This leash can also be used to deter any elimination or pre-elimination behaviours (such as sniffing, and circling) so that you are able to direct the dog to the appropriate area without delay.

Whenever you are not available to supervise, the dog should be housed in either a confined area where it does not eliminate (such as a bedroom, crate, or pen), or in an area where elimination is allowed (such as a dog run, papered pen or room, or outdoors).

Your dog must never be allowed access to indoor sites where it has previously eliminated unless you are there to supervise. Access to these areas can be denied by closing doors, putting up barricades or booby trapping the areas. Odours that might attract the pet back to the area can be reduced or removed with commercial odour eliminators. Be certain to use a sufficient amount of the odour eliminator to reach everywhere that the urine has soaked into. The appeal of the substrate can be reduced by changing the surface covering (a plastic runner with nubs up, taking up the carpet, or electronic mats).

Feeding schedules can be regulated to improve owner control over the situation. After a dog eats, it will usually need to eliminate in 15-30 minutes. Dogs that eat free-choice often need to relieve themselves at a variety of times throughout the day. Dogs that eat one or two scheduled meals each day often void in a more predictable manner.

If the dog has reduced control due to its physical health, scheduling changes may need to be made. Some owners may be able to arrange their schedules so that more frequent trips to the elimination area can be provided. Alternatively a dog walker, or doggy day care, may need to be considered. If the owner cannot accommodate the dog's decreased control, installing a doggy door, or providing a papered area may be necessary.

How can submissive and excitement urination be treated?

For submissive urination, it is important that the owner and all visitors interact with the pet in a less dominant or threatening manner. The pet should be allowed to approach the owner. Kneeling down and speaking softly, rather than standing over the dog and petting the chest instead of the head, may help reduce submissive responses.

Physical punishment and even the mildest verbal reprimands must be avoided. In fact, owners who attempt to punish the pet for urinating submissively will make things worse, since this intensifies fearful and submissive behaviour. When greeting a very submissive dog, the owner may initially need to completely ignore him, being careful to avoid eye contact.

For excitement urination, anything that causes the behaviour should be avoided. During greetings, owners and guests should refrain from eye contact, and verbal or physical contact until the pet calms down. Greetings should be very low key and words spoken in a low, calm tone. Counter-conditioning, distraction techniques and drug therapy might be useful.

How can marking be treated?

Neutering will eliminate male marking behaviour in over 50% of dogs and is also recommended for female dogs that mark during estrus. Confining the pet when he or she cannot be supervised, so that he is unable to mark in the home is very important. Urine residues must also be removed from areas where dogs have been marking.

During retraining, the owner must closely supervise the pet and when it cannot be supervised it should be confined to its crate or bedroom area, away from areas that have been previously marked.