

# **Potter's Angels Rescue, Inc.**

## **House Breaking Your New Dog**

If you are having trouble houstraining your dog, the very first thing you should do is eliminate the possibility of a medical issue by having a urinalysis and fecal culture done at your veterinarian's office. If they are urinating frequently in small amounts or straining to pee or have diarrhea there is a chance that they are battling a urinary tract infection, have parasites, or have another underlying medical issue. This possibility should be eliminated prior to assuming it is a behavioral issue.

Before I begin on how to houstrain your dog you should be aware that whenever an animal enters a new environment, regardless if they are already housebroken or not, there is a good possibility that they will have a few "accidents" in their new home prior to adjusting to the new routine and the new smells of the home. This does not mean they are not housebroken and should be expected by the new owner.

If the problem persists you should then determine the cause for the inappropriate elimination. The major causes of improper house soiling are: incomplete house-training, urine marking, underlying medical conditions, anxiety disorders, submissive urination, excitement or greeting urination. Regardless of what the cause is, the one thing you should NEVER do to a dog that has soiled inappropriately is yell, hit, or rub their noses in it. This can actually make the problem much worse creating further anxieties in the animal.

## **Incomplete House Training**

For a dog that just needs to be taught the basics of houstraining you should begin with having a designated potty spot outside that you take them to EVERY time you take them outside. As with any training experience, be sure to bring plenty of treats with you. Combine this with a verbal command such as "Go potty" and once they have gone you can give them lots of praise and be sure to give them play time. If a dog learns that as soon as they go potty they immediately get brought back inside, then they will delay going potty to get more outside time with you. If the dog does not relieve itself within a few minutes, bring them back inside and either crate them or keep them on a leash attached to your hip so that they can't sneak off and go potty in the house. After 30 minutes take them back outside and try again. Repeat these steps until the dog has gone potty in the designated area. Until they have become fully housebroken they should be restricted from having full access to your home by gating off doorways so you can keep a close eye on them at all times.

For puppies it is important that you realize that they have much smaller bladders and

cannot be expected to hold it for hours on end. The general rule of thumb is that puppies can hold it for one hour per month in age. There are also some basic rules that allow you to predict when your puppy will need to potty. You should take your puppy out after they have eaten, finished a play session, or just woke up from a nap. You should also take them out at least once during the night and if you will be gone for longer than the pup can be expected to hold it you should not use a crate. Instead, gate them off in a room (preferably not carpeted) and free of debris that they can chew on and get hurt or poisoned (i.e. electrical cords, plants, etc.) and put down some puppy pee pads for them to go on. The last thing you want to do is crate a puppy for so long that you force them to eliminate in their crate. If they get into this habit, it will be a very difficult one to break.

In a nutshell, the ideal treatment is prevention. If the dog is never given an opportunity to eliminate in the house, it quickly learns to eliminate only outside. A successful training program consists of taking the dog to an appropriate location for elimination on a regular schedule, using positive reinforcement, providing constant supervision when the dog is loose in the house, and confining the pet to a crate/room when it is unsupervised.

### **Urine Marking**

Urine marking is the deposition of urine to indicate home ranges and territories and to locate and identify females that are in heat. Dog urine marking is not a house training issue but rather an issue concerning a whole range of instinctive behaviors. Dogs may urine mark inside the home despite being otherwise well house-trained. Dogs that haven't been spayed or neutered and are in heat mark most frequently. The incidence of urine marking is about 60% higher in unneutered male dogs. Urine marking usually does not develop until a dog has reached sexual maturity (at about 1 year of age). Neutering improves urine marking in 50% of unneutered male dogs (regardless of age) and can often be altogether prevented by neutering before 8 months of age.

When possible, remove or minimize the dog's exposure to arousing stimuli. If the dog marks at one or two places, turn those sites into water and feeding stations. Clean and apply an enzymatic odor eliminator to the marked surfaces. Dogs should be restricted from preferred marking areas. They should be kept under strict supervision and corrected whenever they are showing signs of preparing to mark (circling around an area while sniffing). Again, NEVER yell or hit the dog, just distract them and take them outside. You can do this by keeping a bottle of rocks nearby which you shake when you notice them preparing to mark, followed with a verbal command such as "No Pee". You can also use a spray bottle with water and

give them a little squirt to distract them. You should follow up by taking them outside and praising them for marking outside. If all else fails they also have belly bands on the market for male dogs. If they don't take it off they are an easy and inexpensive way to break the marking habit in your dog.

### **Submissive/Excitable Urination**

Submissive and excitement urination is seen primarily in younger dogs. The triggers are people arriving home to a very excited dog or submissive anxiety from people dominantly approaching them. The reaction is dribbling urine. Submissive or excitement urination can be made worse by punishment and/or excessive attention. In order to resolve this issue, you need to: a) build their confidence and b) lessen the moments of excitement for your dog.

To start with when you arrive home don't touch or pat your dog. Calmly say hello and then carry on with other business. After about 5 minutes (once the excitement of your returning home has lessened) allow your dog to approach you at their level by kneeling or sitting down on the floor facing away from them rather than towering above him. This is a less dominant position. Avoid making eye contact as this can be perceived as threatening and when he does approach you should pat him from underneath instead of over the top of his head. Don't make any sudden moves and always speak in a quiet calm voice. Keep things low key and try not to cause too much excitement.

If he can obey a few commands try telling him to sit or shake, then reward him for obeying a command with an encouraging voice. This will encourage positive behavior while taking his mind off being submissive. Food or toy rewards are useful for this. Reward him with a treat during the greeting when he is not displaying any submissive signs. If he begins to pee use a happy voice and try to change the subject. Suggest something he enjoys like 'Where's your ball?' or 'Wanna go outside to play?'

Confidence building exercises are also key in overcoming their submissive behavior. Grooming builds confidence. You should brush him and handle him for a few minutes every day. He will soon learn to enjoy it and will realize that you mean him no harm.

Slowly and gradually introduce him to as many new things as you can. Socializing with new people and other animals not only helps to build their confidence, but will also provide him with the ability to cope with new experiences in a positive way,

therefore reducing your dog's stress in new situations throughout their life. Get him used to kids, cats, vacuum cleaners, lawn mowers, other people and any other new sounds and experiences you can think of.

Exercise is also a proven confidence booster. Take him for lots of walks and praise him along the way. Let him get used to the sights and sounds of the world. Gradually your dog will gain confidence and the submissive urination will stop.

In general, the dog behavior should be ignored! Do not punish **or** reassure the dog as this makes the problem worse. Punishment, such as yelling or swats, after the fact only confuses the pet more and creates anxiety because they can't connect it with the elimination act. Likewise, reassuring the dog while they are displaying this overly submissive behavior only reinforces the unwanted behavior. Avoid unintentional threatening and dominance gestures, and institute various positive training techniques.

For dogs exhibiting inappropriate elimination due to separation anxiety, please read our informative essay regarding this common behavior and remember, dogs do NOT poop or pee in your home out of spite. I know it may sometimes feel like they are getting even with you for leaving them home alone, but I assure you this is not the case. Animals do not hold grudges or try to get back at the owner when they are displeased, do not get them confused with humans; they are much better than that. ☺