



# THE DOGGY DIGEST

## TRAINING TIPS BROUGHT TO YOU BY MUTTS WITH MANNERS

### **It's Just Another Potty Trainin' Thang! Problem Solving Males Who Mark**

Potty training can be an arduous feat when bringing a dog into your home. Suddenly, the glory days hit and you and Fido are coasting carefree down the highway of life. Until that one fateful day. Perhaps in your home, or even worse, maybe at a friend's house. IF you are the guardian of a male dog, or multiple male dogs you have probably seen Fido hike his leg on something. Chances are, you have seen him do it indoors once or twice also.

What does this mean? Disrespect? Fido doesn't regard you as the boss? Fido isn't accepting the new addition, baby Mikey? What if it meant, I have the utmost respect for you? I regard you as the boss and I got your back, and Even this little one, Mikey, is worthy of my protection? You see, dogs do not consider elimination a great insult. More likely they consider it a comfort, an umbrella of protection, and a family thing. This is how they would find each other in the wild, find a mate in the wild, and send clear messages to potential threats in the wild.

It may not surprise you to read that Fido is driven by scent. Whether he is intact or neutered. Take into consideration that if you unraveled Fido's largest nerve, the olfactory nerve, it would be at least three times the length of his body. Now shove that in his nose and sprinkle a million scent receptors around the tips of his ears, jowls, and the tip of his tongue and you have one serious smelling machine. The amount of information dogs receive from urine is still unknown, but we do know that they can smell a male from a female, whether or not a female is in heat, or if there is anything medically wrong.

As annoying as it is, marking behavior is actually perfectly normal canine behavior. It can get lumped into the same awesome category of canine behaviors we have to modify to have Fido live successfully with us such as digging, humping, chewing, and barking. So if Fido started marking, follow these steps to get potty training back under control.

How can we resolve it?

A solid potty training plan as soon as Fido comes into your home is one of the two most effective ways to prevent urine marking in the home. By using a crate, you can teach Fido how to do what we call, bladder dumping. Bladder dumping is where Fido exits his crate, goes immediately outside, and pees, literally dumping his bladder, leaving nothing behind to mark with. Very close attention has to always be paid to Fido during this phase, as soon as he comes into your home. This is an intense potty training regiment and taking some vacation time to begin is highly recommended. You may want to consider tethering Fido to you to ensure he doesn't make a mistake, crate him if you cannot physically supervise him, or make sure to keep distractions to a minimum for a scheduled amount of time.

As with potty training in general, the same rules apply. 100% supervision, 100% consistency, 100% positive reinforcement, 100% of the time. No questions asked. No exceptions made, and if you have a small breed dog, do not kid yourself. Eventually, his tiny puddles and tootsie roll poops become unacceptable. Only now Fido is in full swing of habit-making.

Frequent visits to the backyard are crucial here until Fido is on a scheduled bathroom break that he can count on. When he actually urinates on something outside, praise, praise, praise, and give him a treat. You may even consider giving him three. Why? Why not? We are trying to counter condition an annoying behavior, remember? When Fido comes back inside, watch him like a hawk.

Punishment is never the answer to a behavior issue. This is also true for marking males. When dogs are punished for going to the bathroom in the house, they will learn to hide from you to eliminate. This will make solving this problem even more difficult. Supervision is the answer. If you cannot supervise, as with regular potty training, Fido should be safely confined to his crate so he cannot have an accident. When you catch Fido in the act, or preferably right before the act, interrupt the behavior with a “no” or “eh, eh” and walk him outside. Once he urinates outside, reward him with praise and a treat. Between supervision and good timing, you will be able to get Fido outside, where he can be successful, and not even begin having mistakes in the house.

Neutering is also a good form of prevention. Neutered males are less likely to mark, and neutered males who have never bred are even less likely. Neutering does not take the place of sound training and management. The two go hand in hand. So talk to your veterinarian, get Fido neutered as soon as you can, and begin a strong potty training and house training plan as soon as Fido enters your home.

Ruling out medical problems like incontinence, urinary tract infections, or prostate issues is also very important. Medical issues can usually be cleared up with medication or other veterinary interventions. Other reasons why Fido may begin eliminating in your home could include memory confusion, mobility issues, being a heavy sleeper, or being triggered by another dog in the house with a medical issue.

Fido and his canine counterparts are taken for granted in their ability to successfully live with picky and delicate humans. In fact, this goes completely unnoticed until a behavior like marking begins. So, if Fido doesn't dig in your backyard, hump your throw pillows, or ever mark indoors give him a big hug and say thank you! Give Fido some credit for being extraordinarily amazing.

**Until next time, keep it pawsitive!**