RE-HOUSETRAINING YOUR ADULT DOG

Many adult dogs adopted from animal shelters were housetrained by their previous homes. While at the shelter, however, they may not have gotten enough opportunities to eliminate outside, and consequently, they may have soiled their kennel areas. This tends to weaken their housetraining habits. Additionally, scents and odors from other pets in the new home may stimulate some initial urine marking. Remember that you and your new dog need some time to learn each other's signals and routines. Even if he was housetrained in his previous home, if you do not recognize his "bathroom" signal, you might miss his request to go out, causing him to eliminate indoors.

Therefore, for the first few weeks after you bring him home, you should assume your new dog is not housetrained and start from scratch. If he was housetrained in his previous home, the re-training process should progress quickly. The process will be much smoother if you take steps to prevent accidents and remind him where he's suppose to eliminate.

Establish a Routine

- Take your dog out at the same times every day. For example, first thing in the morning when he wakes up, when you arrive home from work, and before you go to bed.
- Praise your dog lavishly every time he eliminates outdoors. You can even give him a treat. You must praise him and give him a treat immediately after he has finished and not wait until he comes back inside the house. This step is vital; because rewarding your dog for eliminating outdoors is the only way he will know that is what you want him to do.
- Choose a location not too far from the door to be the bathroom spot. Always take your dogs, on leash, directly to the bathroom spot. Take him for a walk or play with him only after he has eliminated. If you clean up an accident in the house, leave the soiled rags or paper towels in the bathroom spot. The smell will help your dog recognize the area as the place where he is supposed to eliminate.
- While your dog is eliminating, use a word or phrase like "go potty", that you can eventually use before he eliminates to remind him of what he is suppose to be doing.
- Feeding your dog on a set schedule, once or twice a day, will help make his elimination more regular.

Supervise, Supervise, Supervise

Do not give your dog an opportunity to soil in the house. He should be watched at all times when he is indoors. You can tether him to you with a six-foot leash, or use baby gates to keep him in the room where you are. Watch for signs that he needs to eliminate, like sniffing around or circling. If you see these signs, immediately take him outside, on a leash, to his bathroom spot. If he eliminates, praise him lavishly and reward him with a treat.

Confinement

When you're unable to watch your dog closely, he should be confined to an area small enough that he won't want to eliminate there. It should be just big enough for him to comfortably stand, lie down, and turn around in. This could be a portion of a bathroom or laundry room blocked off with boxes or

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baby gates. Or you may want to crate train your dog and use the crate to confine him (see our handout: "Crate training Your Dog"). If he has spent several hours in confinement, when you let him out, take him directly to his bathroom spot and praise him when he eliminates.

Oops!

Most dogs, at some point, will have an accident in the house. You should expect this, as it is a normal part of your dog's adjustment to his new home.

- If you catch your dog in the act of eliminating in the house, do something to interrupt him like making a startling noise (be careful not to scare him). Immediately take him to his bathroom spot, praise him, and give him a treat if he finishes eliminating there.
- Do not punish your dog for eliminating in the house. If you find a soiled area, it is too late to administer a correction. Do nothing but clean it up. Rubbing your dog's nose in it, taking him to the spot and scolding him, or any other type of punishment, will only make him afraid of you or afraid to eliminate in your presence. Animals do not understand punishment after the fact, even if it is only seconds later. Punishment will do more harm than good.
- Cleaning the soiled area is very important because dogs are highly motivated to continue soiling in areas that smell like urine or feces (see our handout: "Successful Cleaning to Remove Pet Odors and Stains").

Other Types of Housesoiling Problems

If you have consistently followed the housetraining procedures and your dog continues to eliminate in the house, there may be another reason for his behavior.

- **Medical Problems:** House soiling can often be caused by physical problems such as a urinary tract infection or a parasite infection. Check with your veterinarian to rule out any possibility of disease or illness.
- **Fearful / Excitement Urination:** Some dogs, especially young ones, temporarily lose control of their bladders when they become excited or feel threatened. This usually occurs during greetings, intense play, or when they are about to be punished (see our handout: "Fearful and Excitement Urination").
- **Urine-Marking:** Dogs sometimes deposit urine or feces, usually small amounts, to scent-mark. Both male and female dogs do this, and it most often occurs when there is instability in their relationships (see our handout: "Marking Behavior in Dogs").
- **Separation Anxiety:** Dogs that become anxious when they are left alone may house soil as a result. Usually, there are other symptoms, such as destructive behavior or vocalization (see our handout: "Separation Anxiety").
- **Fears or Phobias:** When animals become frightened, they may lose control of their bladder and/or bowels. If your dog is afraid of loud noises, such as thunderstorms or fireworks, he may house soil when he is exposed to these sounds (see our handout: "Helping Your Dog Overcome the Fear of Thunder and Other Startling Noises").
- **Surface Preferences:** When a dog had been trained to eliminate on only one type of surface, such as newspapers, or has not been offered a variety of surfaces, such as being confined to a run with a concrete floor, a surface preference may develop. This can be difficult to change but is often managed by ensuring that their preferred substrate is unavailable indoors, but is available in an outdoor location.

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