



# Module 18: Understanding Typical Canine Psychiatric Behaviours

- Why dogs mark in inappropriate places
- The reason dogs may urinate when excited or submissive
- Urination as a result of loud noises
- The why behind soiling your home

In earlier modules we reviewed the typical behaviours in puppies and dogs that you should not be worried about. In this module we are going to examine the typical canine psychiatric behaviours that will need addressing. We will explore:

- Why dogs mark in inappropriate places
- The reason dogs may urinate when excited or submissive
- Urination as a result of loud noises
- The why behind soiling your home
- Neglect and the psychiatric results

## Understanding Typical Canine Psychiatric Behaviours - 4m46s

### Introduction

**Several behaviours are related to psychiatric problems in your dog, but not all of them.**

Marking is a normal behaviour in your dog as is urinating wherever they are when they need to go. It goes back to their roots of living outdoors in the wild, surviving and taking care of themselves naturally, but it can bring about 'problem' behaviours, as we perceive them. Your dog may also be trying to communicate with you regarding certain behavioural issues. It is important you learn to read their behaviour and determine if you have an abnormal psychiatric behaviour or a normal response.

## 18.1 Marking in Inappropriate Places

**Your dog may urinate in various places in your home instead of asking to go outside or going in designated locations you have set up.** This is a normal behaviour based on marking their territory. Your dog has territorial marking behaviour that may mean going in numerous places or marking a specific location.

Your dog may perceive certain places as weak locations.

They may feel a threat could enter the area unless they have marked it. On the other hand, your dog may be marking in areas they are most comfortable in and wish to defend. This can be seen when you have other animals in the house. You may see one dog in a space they love and your other dog goes behind them to mark that same spot in an attempt to keep the other dog out of that space. Marking is usually about food, water and safety.

In some instances it is possible for your dog to defend a spot even physically because of these needs. This is usually displayed by marking in inappropriate places, where they will also remain in that spot and show aggression. By understanding the reason behind their territorial marking you will be able to address it. You need to relieve the territorial stresses your dog feels in order to stop the marking from happening. The first thing you may wish to do is address their food, water and safety concerns. If your dog is fed on a regular schedule with enough food then they may not feel the need to mark areas where they have buried food, or the area you feed and water them. Making your dog feel safe in all areas of your home is also another way to stop marking in certain areas. If you have addressed their instinctive concerns, but still see marking in inappropriate places, you may want to consider the fact that it has a sexual component.

Dogs also mark territory in order to display their pheromones for other dogs. The best way to stop this behaviour is to get your dog spayed or neutered.

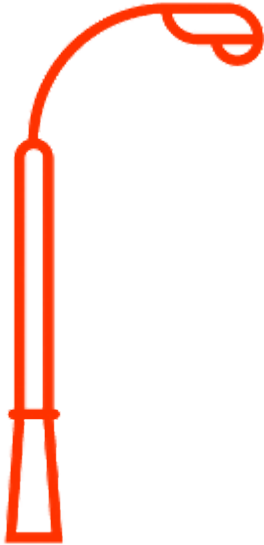
The procedure removes their sexual component that requires them to spread their scent. For some dogs the procedure may not take care of the entire problem. If this is the case you will need to seek behavioural help from a behaviourist, or determine if there is a medical or behavioural problem not associated with marking. If your dog is territorial and willing to physically defend a location, as well as marking it with their scent, you need to address the perceived threat. What is causing this behaviour? Is it another dog or animal in your home? Has your dog faced a very real threat before, such as an intruder, and the behaviour resulted from this attack?

When there is a situation of marking in inappropriate places you should never raise your voice or show anger.

You can make the situation worse by becoming angry at your pet. They do not understand your wrath and your anger can confuse the dog even more than they already are. The best thing to do is not provide any response that would be perceived as anger or a negative reinforcement. Ignore the behaviour and seek help from a professional. There are products that are designed to help keep your pet away from certain areas. You can try those and also seek help from your vet. A vet may prescribe

certain medications to help alleviate the anxiety or fear that is causing the inappropriate behaviour.

## FACT



Allowing a dog to wee on a lamp-post causes damage because the acids in the urine can corrode the metal. *Source: mirror.co.uk*

## 18.2 Urination Due to Excitement and Submission



**Excitement can cause your dog to lose control of their bladder.** You may have experienced a similar sensation, perhaps when you were laughing too hard or in a very frightening situation. It is embarrassing and while you have controlled the situation, sometimes your dog cannot. Excitement will usually happen during playtime and at greetings, which is when your dog may urinate accidentally. In puppies this is often due to the inability to control their bladders. They are too young to be able to contain their excitement, particularly if they have to go to the toilet already. Young dogs and older dogs that may be heading towards incontinence can also urinate due to their extreme excitement. For puppies and young dogs the problem will resolve itself when they mature. However, if you inappropriately chastise them or provide negative reinforcement the behaviour is apt to continue. You do not want to soothe your dog when they have had an accident. You also do not want to show your anger. All you need to do is clean up the mess. If the problem persists beyond normal age or happens more frequently than you feel is correct, you should go to the vet. Your vet needs to rule out any medical issues your puppy, young dog or older dog may have as the reason for their urination due to excitement. You can also avoid accidents in the house by letting your puppy or dog out to play. Also take frequent walks to ensure your dog is able to empty its

bladder and thus avoid infections.

Always keep your greetings low key as this will lessen the excitement your dog feels.

It is a good idea to ignore your dog until he is calm in order to prevent over excitement and improper greetings when you arrive home, such as jumping and other normal excitement behaviours.

Urination can be linked to submission. In the dog world urination is a way to communicate and your dog may be urinating to show 'social appeasement'. It means your dog is trying to show it is not a threat to you or to another animal. Dogs that submissively urinate will do so when they greet other animals or people. They may also have issues when excited, playing or experiencing physical contact, such as petting, getting punished or being scolded. Specifically, if the behaviour is related to submissive behaviours and not excitement related submission, you may need to change your communication. Scolding or punishing your dog may lead to fear of you, and therefore, they are more apt to continue urinating to show their submission and fear.

**There may be several reasons why dogs urinate: For example, dogs may also urinate in inappropriate places due to:**

- Separation anxiety
- Marking over the urine of another dog or animal
- Lack of house training
- Urinary infections

Male dogs will often urine mark while in the presence of female dogs in heat or in the presence of other male dogs. Reward your dog when he urine marks in the right places. Try and keep other dogs away from his yard or territory. Use pet deodoriser to reduce the scent of urine so that it doesn't trigger the urge to urinate. Dogs often tend to urinate in a spot where they've urinated before.

## 18.3 Unusual Levels of Noise

**For some dogs noises are just too much.** Your dog may have a phobia related to noise that causes him to lose control of his bowels. This is a fear response brought about by a full or part full bladder or improper control of the bowels. It can be related to a medical problem, such as older dogs having less control and urinating when there is noise. It may be a puppy or young dog that has yet to gain full control of their abilities.

The response of urinating happens because of the cause, which is noise.

To make certain your dog does not lose control you need to desensitise your dog to the sounds it seems to fear. This can be easier said than done. In some situations, such as thunderstorms, cars backfiring and fireworks - you can never anticipate when the noise will happen. You can try to get your animal used to the sounds by re-creating the noise, but often your dog recognises the

difference between a simulation and the real thing. If it is a vacuum cleaner or a more standard noise that is the problem, you can help your pet to stop urinating in the wrong locations by helping your dog get used to the object or sound that is made. It will take a little time, but it is possible.

## 18.4 Soiling your Home



**Above you read about marking and urination due to excitement or submissive behaviours.** There are other reasons your dog might be soiling your home. Urination is not the only way your dog will go to the toilet. Bowel movements can be just as difficult to control as urination. The above statements will apply in this situation. There may be a cause of excitement or fear that causes a loose bowel movement. Sometimes your dog is unhappy for reasons that have nothing to do with fear. An unhappy dog may leave you 'a gift' to show their displeasure. In this case they are trying to communicate with you, but you have not responded in a way that alleviates their unhappiness. It may be that your dog has to go to the toilet and cannot hold it any longer. This would require a change in your behaviour, where you come home or provide more frequent walks for your dog. If you cannot come home you may need to leave your dog outside or train them to soil dog pads.

The best course of action is to rule out any possibility of a medical condition that would cause the behaviour. The next step is to ensure your dog is getting appropriate amounts of time to relieve itself.

If these two options do not take care of the behaviour, or it continues to increase, then it is time to assess psychiatric reasons behind soiling your home. Assess the behaviour in your dog. Is it a new behaviour? Has this behaviour always occurred? Are there times when the behaviour seems worse? For example, if you went on a trip for a week and came back to find your dog is now soiling your home it is a pretty good indication that your dog was highly upset by your absence. Also think back to when your dog was younger if the behaviour was a constant. If the behaviour existed from early puppyhood and is still going on there may be an issue with your training. Perhaps you accidentally rewarded the behaviour of soiling your home and it became a conditioned response.

Only when you can clearly assess the situation will you be able to determine the underlying cause of what has your dog soiling your home.

## 18.5 Other Behaviours Result from Neglect



**You may not realise you are neglecting your pet but sometimes the above behaviours, as well as others, can be a direct result of dog neglect.** Even the most conscientious pet owner can neglect their pet - as perceived by their dog. To understand certain behaviours and fix them, like urination or soiling of your home, you have to sometimes look beyond the typical behaviours listed above and focus on what may not be apparent to you.

**Ask yourself a few questions:**

- Did you greet your dog when you walked in the door, or did you ignore your dog?
- Did you spend 30 minutes at least playing with your dog?
- Is your routine poor: Do you wake up, take your dog out, feed your dog, go to work. Come home, take your dog out, feed your dog, leave again. Come home, take your dog out, feed your dog, and go to bed?

Your interactions with your dog can directly affect how they respond and behave. Your dog might soil your bed, clothing or favourite items because of jealousy. Your dog is saying it feels neglected or replaced by something else. Some dogs turn to aggression when a new baby is brought home because they are suddenly replaced by the baby and all the time it takes to take care of the baby.

**Neglected dogs or canines with emotional problems may demonstrate different signs:**

- Drooling, pacing
- Shivering
- Urinating or defaecating
- Aversion to being touched
- Spinning obsessively
- Chewing things around the house
- Barking, whining and crying

Owning a dog means giving it the attention it needs and not just fulfilling daily needs. Your dog still needs attention, play time and affection.

## **Summary**

Dogs will mark in inappropriate places for several reasons, usually relating to instincts they still have. While these instincts or needs are often no longer necessary it does not mean the behaviour is going to stop. You can understand their behaviour and train your dog to stop marking territory. By learning why your dog urinates due to excitement and submission you have also discovered ways to curb that behaviour and stop it from happening again. Whether it is unusual levels of noise, neglect, or soiling your home due to fear or attention requirements, how you communicate and understand your dog is very important.

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