

# Urine-Marking Behaviors in Cats and Dogs

Sometimes a pet may soil in the house, not due to lack of house training, but because they feel the need to stake their claim over an area. Any changes in the environment, including new smells, new people, or new animals, may lead your pet to mark her territory. Don't worry, your pet isn't peeing on your grandma's knitting bag because he dislikes her. He is simply trying to reaffirm her territory.

## Your pet may be marking if:

1. The soiling is a small amount
2. He marks horizontal objects
3. He is intact (not spayed or neutered)
4. Other pets in the home are intact
5. There is conflict with animals in the home
6. He pees frequently on walks

## Resolve it!

1. Spay & Neuter all animals in the home; intact animals tend to be more dominant, and feel the need to mark their territory. Although intact animals are more likely to mark, altered animals may also mark in response to intact animals in the home.
2. Clean thoroughly all areas where the animal has peed – your cat or dog will want to continue marking what they have already marked in order to reaffirm their territory. Don't use strong chemicals, as this may produce over-marking by your pet.
3. Block access to new things in the environment; place grocery bags, guests' shoes and belongings, etc, in areas that the pet cannot pee or spray on.
4. If you can tell that your pet is thinking about marking something, make a loud, aversive noise, so that they associate the intent to mark with an aversive response. For dogs, lead him outside to pee and praise him for urinating; for cats, make the noise without the cat seeing you so that he does not associate you with the noise.
5. Resolve conflicts between animals with positive reinforcement techniques and the help of a trainer. You can contact Animal Friends for obedience classes or [www.apdt.com](http://www.apdt.com) to find a trainer in your area.
6. Never punish your animal for marking – they won't understand why they are being punished! It is ideal if you can make an aversive noise during or before the behavior, but punishment after the behavior will not be effective.
7. Always praise your pet for using their litter box or for peeing outside.



Urine-marking is most often a dominance behavior in animals. Some pets will mark, however, when they feel anxious or upset. If this sounds like your pet, contact your veterinarian for options on resolving your pet's anxiety. Intact animals are more prone to anxious behaviors, so consider altering your pet as early as possible. A trainer may also be helpful in resolving anxiety issues by working on behavior modifications. You might consider playing soft music for your pet or using an aromatherapy spray designed to reduce pet anxiety.

See our handout on litter-box issues with cats for other possible solutions. There are also aromatherapy, pheromone based sprays that can reduce anxiety in cats, such as Feliway Spray.

For more information on Animal Friend's classes and training visit [www.ThinkingOutsideTheCage.org](http://www.ThinkingOutsideTheCage.org)