

## Housetraining Your New Dog

Dogs can be trained not to eliminate in the house because they naturally develop preferences for eliminating in certain places or on certain surfaces like grass. Dogs will not typically eliminate where they sleep, eat and spend most of their time. This is very useful in housetraining dogs. When you housetrain your dog, make use of this ability to learn when and where to eliminate. If you don't actively teach them where to eliminate, they will develop their own preferences, which may be very undesirable, such as the living room rug. If your adult dog is soiling in the house, you must retrain him to prefer a new location to eliminate – OUTDOORS! You want to reinforce acceptable behavior, and minimize the opportunities for unacceptable behavior. Punishing unacceptable behavior does not work when housetraining dogs.

Adult dogs can typically hold their waste for 6 to 8 hours during the day and 8 to 10 hours overnight. These are averages and individual dogs may be able to hold their elimination longer or shorter than this. You should learn the physical limits of your dog and not exceed them. It is not fair to expect your dog to hold her elimination longer than she is physically able.



Housetraining takes time and a commitment from the family to do it right. Dogs don't just train themselves, although some train easier than others. Everyone in the household must be willing to help – taking the dog out at all hours, supervising the dog so accidents don't happen, and cleaning up when they do. It may take several weeks to months to get a dog reliably housetrained. If you are consistent and patient in following the rules suggested below, you should be very successful in housetraining your dog with a minimum of distress to you or to her.

- ✓ Use a crate! Think of your dog's crate as his babysitter. When you cannot supervise your dog, you can feel comfortable knowing that he is safe and your house is safe. Crates can be used to prevent dogs from having opportunities to house soil, be destructive, or annoy family members at inappropriate times. They can also provide your dog with a safe place where he can go to be away from others, like small children who may annoy him. Crating may prevent a behavior from occurring, but does not train the dog not to do it when given the opportunity. If crating time is excessive, your dog may not have sufficient time for exercise and social interaction with family members. Without this time, other problems may be created such as fearfulness of people and new things.
- ✓ Try to be consistent in your routines with your dog. Dogs do best when they have an established routine for feeding, play, naps and elimination. We recommend getting your dog on a strict routine by taking him out to relieve himself as soon as he is done eating. Scheduling regular meals can make it easier for you to guess when the dog needs to eliminate and then you can take her to the appropriate spot for elimination.
- ✓ Reward good behavior. Take the dog to the place where you want her to eliminate at times when she most likely needs to go – first thing in the morning after waking up, after each meal, after naps, after play, after chewing on a bone, before bed time. When taking the dog out, say "OUT" or a word or phrase of your choice. Immediately take her on lead to the spot where she should eliminate. Stand with her and tell her "Do your business" or "Go potty." When she eliminates, praise her lavishly but quietly and give her a tasty tidbit. It is very



important that you reward her for going in the appropriate place. This is how she learns her preferences. When she is done, take her indoors by saying "IN." This routine teaches her that "OUT" means elimination only, and as soon as she is done she goes "IN." Wait a few minutes and then take her out to play or for a walk by using a different word or phrase, such as "Want to go play?" or "Want to go for a walk?" Allowing your dog to go out on her own will never teach her that the behavior of eliminating outdoors is what you would like her to continue doing. No one was there to reinforce it.

- ✓ **Manage! Manage! Manage!** You must supervise your dog at all times. This can easily be done by keeping her with you by leashing her to your belt or to your chair, or putting up baby gates or closing doors to keep her in sight. Letting her run free, unsupervised is an invitation to disaster. If she has frequent accidents in the house, she may begin to develop preferences for those locations which will make it harder for her to learn where she should eliminate. Think about a 2 year old toddler. You probably wouldn't leave her in the kitchen without diapers when you went to take a shower. Isn't that what the crib or playpen is for? Use your crate or small room when you cannot watch your dog.
- ✓ If your dog must be left for long periods of time, we recommend hiring a local pet sitter or responsible child to come in and take your dog out to relieve himself. Forcing your dog to urinate and defecate in his crate by leaving him for long periods will not help the process.
- ✓ Never punish after the fact. Dogs will have some accidents no matter how good a job you do in training her. **If she is caught in the act**, actually squatting to eliminate, don't yell at her, hit her or kick her. Simply pick her up and tell her in a neutral tone of voice, "OUT", carry her to the appropriate place and let her finish eliminating. Yelling, hitting, making loud noises or other punishments don't help with housetraining and seem to cause fears that can actually disrupt the housetraining process. **If she wasn't caught in the act**, don't yell, hit her or do any other punishment, like sticking her nose in her mess. This is totally ineffective and only teaches the dog to mistrust you. She will not make the connection between the behavior that produced the mess (squatting and eliminating) and the punishment delivered minutes or hours later. At best the dog punished after the fact will learn to avoid messes and become fearful of the owners. Even if you find the mess just a few seconds after it happened, taking the dog outside will not help. Simply clean up the mess and try to supervise her more carefully. If you feel the need to roll up a newspaper to "spank" the dog, we suggest you roll it up and hit yourself over the head for not keeping an eye on your dog.
- ✓ Clean any soiled area with a good enzymatic cleaner. Dogs will be attracted back to soiled areas by the smell, so it is a good idea to eliminate the odors. The most effective ways to get rid of the odors is with enzymatic cleaners that are available at any pet store near you. Sometimes white distilled vinegar can help to dilute odors. Avoid cleaning agents containing ammonia. This actually smells like waste and may attract the dog back to eliminate.
- ✓ Gradually offer more freedom. As your dog has fewer accidents and eliminates in the proper place more frequently, gradually give her more freedom in the house. This should be done gradually over a few weeks. There shouldn't be a sudden transition from constant supervision to none. If your dog has an accident when you are giving her more freedom, go back to more supervision for a while, then transition slowly to more freedom again later.