

Housetraining

For some owners, housetraining their newly adopted dog or puppy can often be very frustrating. However, with careful supervision, most young puppies or older dogs can be housetrained in less than two weeks. This factsheet offers advice on how you can successfully housetrain your puppy or dog.

Apart from housetraining a puppy, there may be other circumstances where a dog needs a degree of retraining, such as a dog that has spent sometime in kennels. In all cases the same training program can be adopted to achieve successful results. Should your dog or puppy not respond to the training methods outlined below, seek advice from us to ensure that the toileting problems are not caused by a medical condition.

It must be emphasised that the single most important aspect of housetraining is for the owner to praise and reward the dog each and every time they perform in the chosen toileting area. Always IGNORE any 'mistakes'. Dogs that are punished for inappropriate toileting, may become fearful of performing in front of the owner, instead toileting in the owner's absence or in a hidden area in the house.

Many 'mistakes' that occur are due to the owner's inability to supervise the puppy closely or recognise the puppy's toileting needs.

How to housetrain your dog

- Firstly it is important to develop a regular and consistent routine and identify the times when the dog needs to relieve themselves.
- With puppies there is often a fairly set pattern to their toileting habits; immediately after waking, after exercise or play and after each meal.
- Observe changes in behaviour, which may suggest that they need to relieve themselves, such as sniffing the floor, circling or whining.
- Ensure that the puppy is carefully supervised during the times that they would normally relieve themselves. This means that they should not be out of sight at any time.
- If you are unable to closely supervise, confine them to an area that they would not normally choose to go. As soon as they are released take them to the chosen toilet area.
- Very few dogs, given the choice, will relieve themselves in their own sleeping area.
- In the evenings encourage the puppy to sleep, waking them to go outside to the toilet before leaving them overnight. Gradually extend the period of time the puppy is left overnight in between toileting.
- During the day take them outside to the chosen area every hour.
- Wait with them quietly until they have performed. It is important to reward them at the right time.

Please note: If they have been scolded for going to the toilet in the house, it may be necessary for the owner to hide at a discreet distance as they may associate toileting in front of the owner with punishment.

- When the puppy goes, praise them generously but quietly so as not to overwhelm them and offer a tasty titbit or remain outside using play as a form of reward.

- If the puppy asks to go out and does not perform within three minutes, take them back inside, withholding any form of praise and place them in an area that they would not choose to go. Leave them for an hour and take them outside again. Praising them if they perform.
- Do not instigate free play until the puppy performs.
- Introduce a 'toilet word' to say when the dog performs such as 'do your business', 'toilet', or 'be quick' followed by praise. Soon they will associate the chosen toilet word with the action of relieving themselves.
- Once the puppy is becoming more reliable about going on the correct location, extend the period of time between taking them out.
- If the puppy has an accident indoors, the soiled surfaces should be cleaned thoroughly with a biological (non-ammonia) detergent to discourage them from repeating the behaviour. It may be necessary to restrict the puppy's access to these areas.
- Check the consistency of their bowel movements to ensure they are solid. It is important to find a diet which suits your dog and meets with his nutritional requirements. If in doubt, ask us!
- Please remember always take a poop scoop when taking your dog out for housetraining and walks. It is now a legal obligation to clean up after your dog in public places.