

# Did You Know?

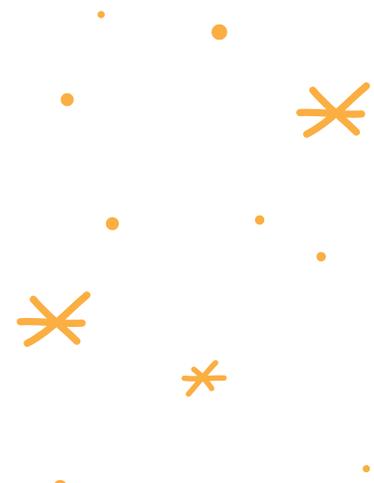
## Territorial Marking Behavior in Dogs And Cats

**Dogs and cats are territorial animals. This means that they “stake out a claim” to a particular space, area, or object. They let other people and animals know by marking it with a variety of methods and at many levels of intensity.**

For example:

- A dog may bark to drive away what he perceives as intruders to his territory
- A cat may mark a valued object by rubbing it with her face
- Some pets may go to the extreme of urinating or defecating to mark an area as their own

Urine marking is not a house-soiling problem but a territorial behavior. Therefore, to resolve the problem, you need to address the underlying reason for your pet’s need to mark his territory in this way.



### House Soiling or Urine Marking? Your pet may be urine marking if:

- The problem is primarily urination. Dogs and cats rarely mark with feces.
- The amount of urine is small and found primarily on vertical surfaces. Dogs and cats do sometimes mark on horizontal surfaces. Leg lifting and spraying are versions of urine marking, but even if your pet doesn’t assume these postures, he may still be urine marking.
- Any pet in your home is not spayed or neutered. Both intact males and females are more likely to urine mark than are spayed or neutered animals. However, even spayed or neutered animals may mark in response to other intact animals in the home.
- Your pet urinates on new objects in the environment like a shopping bag or a visitor’s purse, on objects that have unfamiliar smells, or on objects that have another animal’s scent.
- Your pet has conflicts with other animals in your home. If one cat is intimidating another cat, the bullied cat may express his anxiety by urine marking.
- Your pet has contact with other animals outside your home. A cat that’s allowed outdoors may come home and mark after encountering another cat outside. If your pet sees another animal through a door or window, he may feel a need to mark his territory.

### What You Can Do:

- Spay or neuter your pet as soon as possible. Spaying or neutering your pet may stop urine marking altogether, but if he has been urine marking for a long time, a pattern may already be established.
- Resolve conflicts between animals in your home.
- Restrict your pet's access to doors and windows through which they can observe animals outside.
- Keep your cat indoors. He will be safer, live longer, and feel less need to mark his territory.
- Clean soiled areas thoroughly with an enzymatic cleaner. Don't use strong smelling cleaners as these may cause your pet to "over-mark" the spot.
- Make previously soiled areas inaccessible or unattractive.
- If that isn't possible, try to change the significance of those areas. Feed, treat, and play with your pet in the areas he is inclined to mark.
- Keep objects likely to cause marking out of reach. Guests' belongings, new purchases, and similar items should be placed in a closet or cabinet.
- If your pet is marking in response to a new resident in your home such as a new baby, roommate, or spouse, have the new resident make friends with your pet by feeding, grooming, and playing with him. Make sure good things happen to your pet when the new baby, roommate, or spouse is around.
- For dogs: watch your dog at all times when he is indoors for signs that he is thinking about urinating.
  - When he begins to urinate, interrupt him and take him outside, then praise him and give him a treat if he urinates outside.
  - When you're unable to watch him, confine your dog in a crate or small room where he has never marked or tether him to you with a leash.

### What Not To Do:

Don't punish your pet after the fact. Punishment administered even a minute after the event is ineffective because your pet won't understand why he is being punished.

### Pets Aren't People:

Dogs and cats don't urinate or defecate out of spite or jealousy. If your dog urinates on your baby's diaper bag, it's not because he dislikes or is jealous of your baby. The unfamiliar scents and sounds of a new baby in the house are simply causing him to reaffirm his claim on his territory.

### Pets may mark when they feel anxious or upset. For example:

- A new baby in the home brings new sounds, smells, and people, as well as changes in routine. Your dog or cat probably isn't getting as much attention as he was used to. All of these changes cause him to feel anxious, which may cause him to mark.
- Likewise, a pet that is generally anxious may become more so by the presence of roaming neighborhood animals in your yard or by the introduction of a new cat or dog into your household.
- If your pet is feeling anxious, you might consider talking to your veterinarian about medications to reduce his anxiety while you work on behavior modification.