



Greater Androscoggin Humane Society

www.SavingPetsinMaine.org

Potty Training for Puppies

Potty training is an important component when welcoming a new puppy into your family. It requires patience, understanding and consistency.

Rule of thumb: puppies can typically hold urine for an hour per month of age. As they grow, puppies can begin to hold urine overnight. Do not provide water after 7pm to set up for success until older. Be careful of setting up undesired behaviors by getting up when the puppy cries at night. They may be crying for your attention which can be misinterpreted as having to go outside for a potty break. Wait for the crying to stop, then go out and check to see if the puppy urinated or take outside and puppy should immediately eliminate. No speech/interaction with puppy should be offered at that time.

To also ensure fewer overnight disruptions, do not free-feed puppies. Puppies should have 15-20 minutes to eat and then the food will be removed. This helps teach a dog that they need to eat on a schedule.

After intense play, training, crating, and mental stimulation, a puppy will start to circle and look for a place to urinate. Immediately take the puppy outside. Until puppy learns your schedule and to hold it, the puppy should be set up for success by gating, crating, tethering to an object or human, x-pen etc. so that they cannot go to a place in your home to urinate.

Pad Training

Absorbent pads are excellent in x-pens or gated areas as we want the puppy to succeed and not urinate in undesirable locations/spots. To transition a puppy to outside elimination, move the pad to that location and wait. If puppy defecates/urinates in undesirable spot, put feces and urine onto pad and show them.

When considering pad training, consider size, mobility and long-term goals. Some people who live on houseboats, have small dogs, are considered elderly or have a medical condition where it is harder to go for walks, or even in apartments where it is not convenient to take the dog outside to eliminate may choose to pad train for duration of the dog's life.

Do not expect a dog to understand they should be eliminating outside while on walks, etc, if they have been pad trained, although it may come naturally especially in a multi-dog home.

Punishment and Potty Training

Dogs only learn/live in-the-moment and if they have accidents, it is from human error not the puppy. They do not understand punishment and it can often backfire to create a fearful or nervous dog. If caught urinating or defecating in an undesirable location, make a loud noise to interrupt,

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take the puppy outside, and then come back in to clean up. Never spank, correct, or rub their nose in it, as many dogs will then instead find concealed spot to eliminate in the future (different rooms, behind chairs, etc.) Again, it is us missing their cues that they need to go outside and they do not yet understand that they need to hold it. That is where the above methods of containment helps set the puppy up for success.

If it seems that your puppy is unable to hold it or is constantly urinating etc, it is best to contact your veterinarian to rule out any medical issues.

Housetraining Adult Dogs and Troubleshooting

Depending on history, prior training, current stress, changes, etc, issues with potty training may arise. When bringing a new adult dog home, do not expect perfect house-training as they are new and still learning the dynamic of your home, even if the dog is considered potty-trained. Tethering, crating, etc, as stated above, sets the dog up for success as he learns your schedule and lifestyle.

Initially, new dogs should be treated like puppies and shown where to go while on-leash. Less human speech/engagement is better until the dog eliminates, and then calm praise and reward (treat, play, etc.) This routine should be established immediately upon welcoming them home and continue for several weeks, until the dog is immediately going to that spot to eliminate.

If a dog is defecating/urinating in-kennel or in-home, separation anxiety should be ruled out before assuming it is a potty training issue. Usually stool is extremely loose due to stress and other signs of separation anxiety should be noted. (watch for signs that the dog is primarily pottying while being separated from owner.)

If left unattended outdoors, like in a fenced yard, dogs will often spend more time playing than focusing on urination etc, or if they are left alone and have separation anxiety, they will not eliminate as needed. They then will come indoors and either urinate or finish urination and it sets up a continued undesired behavior, where they learn to come indoors to eliminate.

Dependent on a dog's past, some may have only learned to eliminate on a specific substrate. Dogs from overcrowding/hoarding situations might only know to defecate on vinyl flooring, cement, etc, depending on where they were housed. Free-roaming dogs may not understand to eliminate while on-leash/tethered etc, and will have to be taught that it is safe to use the bathroom while on leash/tether.

If it seems that your dog is unable to hold it or is constantly urinating, has diarrhea, etc, it is best to contact your veterinarian to rule out any medical issues.