



Removing Pet Stains and Odors

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Dogs and cats often prefer to urinate and defecate on soft absorbent surfaces. Unfortunately, that may include carpets and bedding. After a pet finds a surface they prefer, they will continue to use the same area unless the behavior is interrupted. To keep the pet from going on these indoor surfaces you must thoroughly clean stains. What seems clean to you may not smell clean to the pet. Regular household cleaners will not remove proteins found in urine and feces. Follow these helpful tips to remove stains and odors from your house.

Find Old Stains

Before you can fix a housetraining problem or litter box issue, you must thoroughly clean all stains even if they are old and dry. Even if there is just one spot in the house, your pet will smell the scent and think it is an appropriate place to eliminate.

- Carefully check for stains in the corners of the house and even on walls. Use a black light in a dark room to find hidden urine stains.
- Look for any discoloration on carpet or tile.
- Search for spots around the dog or cat's bed or place they sleep.
- Do what your animal does. Get down on their level and use your nose to sniff it out.

Fixing the Problem

Before you begin cleaning, mark all areas that need to be cleaned with a Post-It note. You will lose track of stains once you start cleaning. Purchase a high quality enzymatic cleaner and some paper towels. Take the pet out of the room where you will be working. Do not put them in a room where they can have more accidents. Remove any objects or bedding that can go in the washing machine.

Clean Washable Items

- Add a pound box of baking soda to your wash with normal detergent.
- Air dry items if possible.
- If stain is still present, add an enzymatic cleaner to the wash cycle. There are enzymatic detergents available at some pet stores and online catalogs.

Clean Carpets and Tile

- For fresh stains, remove as much liquid and solid matter as possible. Do not rub liquids into the carpet, blot carefully with a dry towel or rag. Rubbing will put the stain into the padding.
- On tile, remove all traces of liquid and dispose of paper towels or newspaper outdoors. If you are cleaning cat urine, you can place the paper towel or newspaper in the litter box.
- Thoroughly soak the entire area with an enzymatic cleaner. Do not rinse or wipe off the cleaner. Allow cleaner to soak through to the pad and let it air dry. The smell will remain until the area is completely dry. If the animal keeps going back to the same area, cover the stain with aluminum foil and place a heavy dish on top of it. Animals should not be allowed in the room until the stain is completely dry and you have them tethered to you or can watch them closely.

- For old or stubborn stains, rent a carpet-cleaning machine or wet-dry vac. Follow cleaning with an enzymatic cleaner.

Clean Walls

- If urine has soaked through drywall, you will probably need to replace the area. Once drywall has been saturated, it is impossible to remove the enzymes. If wall is brick or slump block, clean majority of stain off wall and follow with an enzymatic cleaner.

Additional Help

- If animals are engaging in marking behavior, it is very beneficial to have them neutered. Marking behavior decreases when the animal is no longer able to reproduce.
- Do not allow animals free access to areas where they urinate in the house. Restrict access to the house until the animals are housetrained or litter box trained. See handouts on housetraining and crate training.
- If an animal has been using a particular surface for a long period of time, you may need to replace the area. As mentioned above, soiled drywall can rarely be salvaged. Cats will continue to spray walls if left untreated. Urine often soaks through to padding under carpet and needs to be replaced.
- Avoid using a steam cleaner. Steam can make the area spread and thoroughly soak through to the padding.
- Do not use regular household cleaners, especially ones containing vinegar or ammonia.
- If you find your dog or cat is repeatedly using the same item to urinate on, put the item out of reach or make it unattractive. Potted plants and other organic material are common targets.
- Carefully test items before using an enzymatic cleaner. Enzymatic cleaners are not appropriate for all surfaces. Varnishes and paints can react with urine making it impossible to use an enzymatic cleaner. These surfaces will need to be stained, painted or replaced.
- Restart the housetraining process. If you have noticed a sudden change in urinating habits from a cat or dog that is housetrained, take them to the vet immediately to have a urinalysis done. The animal may be suffering from a painful infection that is making good behavior impossible.
- Check your animal's bed to see if urine may be leaking while they sleep. If your dog is leaking small amounts of urine, have him checked out by a veterinarian. He may be suffering from incontinence. Keep bed and sleeping area as clean as possible while pet is being treated.
- Watch for any changes the dog has experienced in his routine. Keep a journal of accidents as well as feeding and exercise schedule.
- For litter box issues, make sure you have not changed litter or location of the litter box. Cats are very sensitive to where the litter box is placed and what is in the box. Keep litter as clean as possible and do not make sudden changes to litter. Many cats do not like scented litter, watch for preferences in your cat.
- It will take time for your animal to be retrained. It took time for him to develop this habit and it will take time to unlearn the behavior. Do not punish the pet for accidents in the house. Follow tips outlined in the handouts on housetraining.
- Be patient during the housetraining process. Your anxiety will only make your pet more stressed. Consult a behaviorist if the problem continues or you need additional support.