

The Dog Odor Answer

Tackle that doggie smell with regular bathing and specially designed household products.

Maryann Mott

Ears: Wax buildup can cause an unpleasant smell. First, try cleaning your dogs ears. If that doesn't get rid of the odor, make an appointment with your veterinarian, who can check your dogs ears for an infection.

Anal sacs: These two small sacs, one located on each side of the rectum, contain pungent oil. When your dog defecates, the sacs compress and release the oil. Try washing the hair around your dogs bottom. If that doesn't get rid of the smell, see your veterinarian. The sacs might be infected.

Skin: The most common causes of malodor are bacterial and yeast skin infections stemming from allergies or endocrine problems, says Joy Barbet, DVM, ACVD diplomate, and assistant professor at the University of Florida, College of Veterinary Medicine, in Gainesville.

Barbet estimates 25 to 35 percent of odor-related cases seen in small-animal practices are related to skin and ear problems. That number jumps to about 50 percent during warmer months, she says, when fleas proliferate and allergies to pollens and house dust flare.

Along with scratching, which causes local trauma to the normal skin barrier, allergic reactions actually change the immune chemistry of the skin in such a way that microbes may grow more easily, resulting in infections and more odor, she says.

Take the Odor Battle to the Home Front

After you've figured out the cause of your dogs odor and address the problem, the next step is to get your home smelling good, too.

No one knows how to tackle tough indoor doggie odor better than business owners and purebred hobbyists.

George Bernard, owner of Silver Trails: The Animal Inn, washes the floors and walls of his Westbrook, Conn. kennel with a food-handling product that kills bacteria and odors on contact.

It's the same thing that's used on butcher blocks in butcher shops, so its edible, says Bernard, whose boarding facility houses up to 150 animals. You can actually have a dog lick the floor and he won't get sick.

Booth, a groomer for 26 years, doesn't use any special cleaning liquids. Instead, she plugs in an ionic air purifier to help freshen her 300 square-foot shop.

Dalmatian breeder Elaine Gewirtz tries to prevent odors before they start by cleaning her Southern California home on a regular basis. Every week she vacuums carpets and washes floors. Each of her three dogs beds has removable covers, making them easy to launder. She also opens windows frequently to air out the home.

Gewirtz has noticed that dogs left outside during the day while their owners are at work pick up unpleasant odors, which they then bring indoors. She recommends brushing or wiping down dogs with a damp cloth before letting them in the house.

By tackling odors in your home and on your pet, it won't be long before you not only love just your dog, but how he smells too.

- More cleaning tips -