

## Dog's Behavior Changes After Moving

**A dog misbehaves while adjusting to her new home.**

*By September Morn*

Q. My beautiful 4-year-old dog, previously without any behavior issues, has been urinating and defecating on the bathroom carpet for the past two weeks. Four months ago we moved into my boyfriend's home, which has been an adjustment for her. Here, she is not allowed to sit on the sofa nor sleep in the bedroom. Before, she slept in my bed and had free range of my apartment.

Most of the time she plays well with my boyfriend, but on occasion she growls and shows her teeth when he pets her. My boyfriend has spent more time playing with her and has started feeding her. For my part, I spend about 30 minutes to an hour cuddling her in my lap on the sofa before we go to bed.

I don't know what else to do ... and I am really heartbroken over this.

A. Whenever a dog has sudden changes in elimination habits, it's important to take her to the veterinarian to rule out health problems as a cause. She's not sleeping in your bedroom, so when she needs to eliminate at night she may not be able to get your attention. These nighttime messes didn't start right away when you moved in with your boyfriend, so try and think of anything that may have changed in your routine during the past two weeks.

Your dog has lost some of the comforts and pleasures she enjoyed before the move to your new home. Compromise is always necessary when sharing living space, and you've been doing that all along. But you've been there for four months and your boyfriend has seen that your dog has good house manners, so maybe it's time to adjust the rules a bit. If your dog didn't damage your sofa or harm your furnishings in your old apartment, there's no reason to suspect she might behave destructively if given more freedom in your new home.

It's understandable that your boyfriend might feel better without your dog in the bedroom, but she does need a comfortable spot to sleep. You're already cuddling her in your lap before bed, so it sounds like you're making some changes in that direction. Perhaps a washable slipcover on the couch would help your case. Many stores and catalogs sell attractive covers for couches — buy two, so one can be on the couch while the other is laundered.

Having your boyfriend play with, pet, and feed your dog is a good idea, but her growling indicates she doesn't yet consider him "family." It might help to enroll as a family in a reward-based training class and take turns working with your dog. Also, when you take your dog for walks, let your boyfriend hold the leash. As the two of them become more comfortable with each other, he could sometimes take her for walks without you. The two of them spending quality time together will help them forge their own friendship.

Turning three individuals into a family takes time and patience. You love your boyfriend, but at this point your dog only loves you. If she can regain some of the home comforts she lost in the move, and learn through experience that your boyfriend will always be kind to her, she'll come around and start loving him, too.