

Dog Urinates in the House

A housetrained dog consistently marks his territory — on the furniture.

By September Morn

Q: Our 10-year-old Pug, Jack, marks his territory by urinating on certain pieces of furniture in our house. He doesn't mark in the kitchen, but every other room of the house has been a target. Once he marks a piece of furniture, he returns to re-mark it after I've cleaned it. He seems to know this isn't acceptable behavior because he rarely does it when we're with him. Any help or suggestions you can give would be appreciated.

A. It's interesting that the kitchen is the only room that Jack doesn't mark. I'm guessing that you feed him there. If that's true, it's likely that he avoids marking in there because he doesn't want to pee near where he eats.

If that's part of his motivation for not marking in that room, here's something that might make an impression on him: Each time Jack marks an item of furniture, move his food bowl to that spot for his next few meals. Every time he pees on a different piece of furniture, feed him there for a couple of days. If he marks several items, this means you'll need to use several food bowls and divide his meal among them.

Here's another idea that might help: Continue to thoroughly clean the spots he marks, as you've been doing, but then add your own "mark" with a drop of vanilla. The scent of vanilla is not a dog repellent, but it will let Jack know that you own that furniture and he doesn't.

Also, teach him to mark on cue. When you take him for walks or out to his potty area, take him to upright objects like trees, hydrants, and big rocks and tell him, "Mark it," then praise him when he does. This will show him that there are "good" places for him to engage in his marking practice.

While you're teaching him that marking should only happen in approved areas and not in the house, get him a belly band to wear when indoors. A belly band is a male dog "diaper," like a soft cloth cummerbund. It fastens around the dog's waist and has an inner pocket that holds an absorbent pad to catch urine if he marks inappropriately. You can buy commercially made belly bands from pet supply stores and catalogs. With a belly band, even if Jack tries to mark your furnishings, his urine will be absorbed in the pad and won't reach its intended target. Be sure to check his belly band at least once every hour, and change the pad if it's damp.

Jack has been marking furniture for years now, so he's not going to give it up in a day. It may take several months, following the above suggestions, before he realizes his marking behavior simply isn't working for him any more.