

Housetrained Dog Urinates in the House

Retrain your dog to go outside when he needs to pee.

By September Morn

Q: My male Mixed Breed dog, Zeeke, is 6-years-old and fixed. He was my boyfriend's mom's dog before I met him four years ago. Then, after a year and a half, my boyfriend and I moved in together, and took Zeke with us. My boyfriend's mother used to let Zeeke run around without a leash. We'd sometimes find him four or five miles down the road. But now in our home, he is only allowed to run free in our fenced yard and in the house.

However, in the last year and a half, we discovered Zeeke was peeing around the home. But it didn't happen frequently and we figured they were just accidents. I also knew that Zeeke was bored, especially being fenced in, so we got a new puppy, Maggie. Everything seemed fine at first until we noticed Zeeke starting to pee everywhere. He pees on the couches, my grandpa's wood hutch, the bathroom door, blankets, and most of all on the kitchen floor where we feed him. I've even caught him peeing on Maggie when they play outside. He pees on something everything chance he gets.

I love my dogs, but I'm tired of finding yellow stains everywhere. I've rubbed his nose in the stains and put him in his crate, but nothing has worked. We live in Michigan, and I don't want to leave him outside in the winter cold.

He knows what 'go potty outside' means but still pees in the house anyway. What can I do to stop this behavior?

A: This problem sounds like it's gone from bad to worse fairly quickly. It may be behavioral, but it could also be a sign of health problems. Whenever there's a serious and persistent potty behavior problem like this one, it's important to determine if health-related causes are contributing to it. It doesn't do any good to train away a behavior if it stems from an undiscovered illness or other physical cause.

So first take Zeeke to your veterinarian for a full health checkup, including any blood and urine tests your vet thinks are advisable. If an infection, illness, or imbalance is contributing to Zeeke's extreme pee-marking, the examination and tests should find it.

As far as Zeeke's re-housetraining goes, treat him like a new puppy until you get this issue under control. You'll need to limit his access to the rooms in your home and not let him wander at will. Keep him with you, tethered or gated, in the same room where you are, and watch him like a hawk so he doesn't get a chance to do any peeing behind your back.

Any time he looks at or sniffs a spot like he might mark it, interrupt him verbally and escort him outdoors. At first, take him to his outdoor potty area at least every two hours. Stay with him until he pees, and praise him when he does.

Dogs tend to repeat marking the areas they've left their own urine scent, so clean all the places and things he's marked thoroughly. Enzyme-based cleaners made specifically to clean and deodorize areas soiled by pet urine and feces often work better than regular household cleaners.

For added insurance, make or buy Zeeke a belly-band diaper to wear around his middle. This way, if he does mark indoors, the urine will be absorbed by the pad inside the bellyband. Check the pad frequently, and change it whenever it's wet. Always take off the diaper when you let him outside.

This may sound like a lot to do, but a serious, persistent marking problem like Zeeke's will respond best if you cover all the angles.