

Houstraining a Puppy

Consistently monitoring your puppy's potty habits will ensure success in houstraining her.

By September B. Morn

Q: We may be adopting an 8-month-old Great Pyrenees puppy. She was kept in a kennel outdoors. The owner had passed away. I own an 8-year-old Labrador Retriever, and a 2-year-old Golden Retriever-Chinese Shar-Pei mix. Both are neutered males. Will this pup be a house dog? Will she be able to be houstrained easily, or is she too old? I do understand she will be different from owning and houstraining a Lab.

A: To houstrain an adolescent pup like this Pyr, you'll need to follow a similar schedule as you would with a younger puppy. This means keeping her with you so you can watch her, and taking her out to the approved potty area at least every two hours. Don't just send her out and hope she goes. Accompany her to the area you want her to use and wait there with her so you can praise her when she does her business. If she just sniffs around but doesn't eliminate, take her back inside after about five minutes and try again in an hour or so. Pups her age don't need to eliminate as frequently as younger pups, but you'll need to give her the opportunity to just in case she does need to.

Your adult dogs will probably help her learn clean house manners, as she'll very likely tend to follow their lead. For that reason, it may be helpful to take all three outside when you take the pup for her potty outings.

Keep a record of when your Pyr pees and poops, and note whether it's in the approved area or an accident indoors. You'll soon see a pattern which will help you know what times she's most likely to eliminate, and that will help prevent those inevitable oopses in the house.

When she does have an accident -- and she probably will have a few of those -- stay cool, and don't punish her. It's not her fault -- she's new at this. Calmly sop up the pee or pick up the poop with a paper towel, then take that and the pup to the approved potty area. Drop the poop or smear the pee on the ground in the approved potty area. When the pup looks at it or sniffs it, praise her warmly as if she'd done her business there to begin with. This will help her learn that there's a "good" place to eliminate.

Be sure to thoroughly clean up all potty accidents in the house, as dogs tend to return and re-soil wherever the scent of their own waste lingers. Your males might also be attracted to urine marks where your female pup has peed. Do not use ammonia-based cleaners -- they leave a scent that may smell like urine to the dog, which would encourage re-soiling of that spot. Enzyme-based cleaners made for cleaning up and deodorizing pet waste accidents often work better than ordinary household cleaning solutions.

Feed your Pyr two meals a day at regular times, rather than allowing her to free-feed. Dogs poop about the same number of times per day as they eat, and a regular schedule for meals makes it easier to anticipate the timing of the dog's potty needs. Fresh water should be available at all times during waking hours, though if she's having pee accidents at night, you could remove the water about an hour before bedtime.