



## Re-housetraining Your Adult Dog

While many adult dogs adopted from animal shelters were housetrained in their previous home, this does not necessarily mean that they will be able to remember those rules after a stay in a shelter. It is important to set pets up for success and to teach them the rules in their new home. The basics for housetraining any adult dog are as follows: establish a routine, supervise your dog when loose in the house, restrict your dog's access when unsupervised, and reward your dog for going in the right place.

### **Establish a routine**

- Provide your dog with bathroom breaks at the same time every day and feed her at the same time every day. Providing exercise in the form of daily walks/runs or retrieval games at the same time is also useful to help your dog adjust to her new life.
- A basic bathroom break schedule is to take your dog out first thing after waking up, before and after being restricted to a crate or one room, and before going to bed.
- Choose a specific location to be your dog's bathroom and take them directly to that spot, on leash, to eliminate. You want the spot to be close to the door and of absorbent surface (most dogs do not like to eliminate on non-porous surfaces like a driveway or parking lot).
- Only remain in the bathroom location for about 5 minutes. If she does not eliminate during that time, return indoors and supervise her closely until you go out again (15 to 20 minutes later). You want her learn to go as soon as she gets outside.

### **Restrict the areas accessible to your dog when home alone**

- Giving your dog too much access can lead to problems. Restrict your dog to one room that has been dog-proofed or crate train her for times when she cannot be supervised. A crate is a great way to protect your home and dog from her own curious nose and desire to chew.
- Dogs do not want to eliminate where they sleep so by restricting her to one room, or a crate, you will teach her to hold it until you can get home and provide access to the bathroom location.
- Even if you have a dog door it is important that your dog understand the rules of elimination before being left free range in the home. Consider using an ex-pen or baby gate to restrict the dog to the room with access to the dog door.

### **Supervise your dog**

- Actively supervise your dog when she is exploring your home. Shut doors to rooms that you cannot directly supervise.
- Consider the use of a tether, baby-gates or even leashing your dog to yourself. Control her movements so that you can actively supervise her, and crate her or put her in her room when you cannot.
- Watch for signs that your dog needs to eliminate. These include sniffing, circling, pacing, and walking towards the door, (especially when focused in corners or when the dog had been resting or

engaged in an enjoyable activity previously). Be sure to take her out when you see these signs, use a cue word (“go outside”) and praise her for letting you know she needs to go out.

### **Reward her for going in the right place**

- If your dog urinates on the carpet, she gets relief. If she urinates outside, she gets relief. So where does the desire to go outside come from? You! Right after your dog eliminates in the correct spot provide her with a tasty treat and ample praise.
- While she is eliminating, calmly say a cue such as “go potty”. Over time she will learn what this cue means which you will find very useful when during inclement weather or when traveling.
- Play a quick game of fetch or tug-of-war or walk around the yard/block with her before returning inside. You don’t want her to learn that going to the bathroom ends the fun outdoors or else she may not eliminate as soon as she goes out. Reward her for going right away in the right place with some fun.

### **What to do if she has an accident**

- Clean the stain thoroughly with an enzyme-based pet specific cleaner found at any local pet store. Follow the directions on the label.
- Increase your supervision and consider the use of a housetraining log to determine patterns in accidents to make adjustments to your supervision or her bathroom break schedule.
- Do not use punishment or scold your dog. If you rub your dog’s nose in her urine after arriving home she doesn’t understand that your anger stems from her accident. She associates your anger with your arrival home and begins to posture in an appeasing way when you arrive home. This is misinterpreted as a “guilty look”. If you catch her in the act and scold her she is likely to believe she is wrong for eliminating in front of you, not indoors. Instead of her learning the right place to go she is likely to avoid going in front of you. This is likely to make housetraining even more difficult and become a real problem when you need her to go on leash in the future.
- If your dog has been housetrained previously and suddenly starts to have accidents, schedule a visit to your veterinarian. If there is an underlying medical cause for your dog to have accidents no amount of training will fix it without first resolving any medical issues.
- Other reasons a dog might eliminate in the house include marking, separation anxiety, fears/phobias, and submissive or excited urination. It is important to determine the reason behind house soiling in order to implement an appropriate training program.

**We Can Help!** The Training and Behavior Department at the Humane Society of Western Montana has a variety of resources available to help you and your pets live in harmony. The Humane Society has several dog trainers and a behaviorist on staff to provide affordable group and private training lessons and free behavior consultations.

- Contact Jean, our Animal Behaviorist for a free pet behavior consultation by emailing [behavior@myhswm.org](mailto:behavior@myhswm.org) or calling the Behavior Helpline at (406) 549-9295.
- Contact Mariah, a Certified Professional Dog Trainer, to inquire about private lessons or a group training class. Email [outreach@myhswm.org](mailto:outreach@myhswm.org) or call (406) 549-HSWM.
- Check out our website at [www.myhswm.org](http://www.myhswm.org) for a complete listing of dog classes, rates and additional information.