

MARKING

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Scent marking is a very normal and common behavior (particularly in male dogs), but it becomes a big problem when marking occurs in the home. Both sexes scent mark, but unneutered males are the worst offenders because the presence of testosterone stimulates signaling of sexual availability and claiming of territory.

Resources such as toys, food bowls, chew treats, bones, and beds are the most likely objects to be marked, and in some cases a dog will actually mark a person or something that smells heavily of that person, such as a sofa or bed. Scent marking is usually more common in multi-dog households where dogs compete for space, resources, and human attention.

How Can I Stop My Dog from Scent Marking?

- Remove high-value resources that encourage competitive marking.
- Do not allow the dog or dogs that scent mark to roam freely around the home.
- To prevent access to favorite marking spots during times when you are unable to actively supervise your dogs, confine them to a dog-proofed room or *crate*.
- Avoid competitive or vigorous play indoors, as excess activity encourages urination.
- If a dog is about to mark, interrupt the behavior with a vocal interrupter and immediately direct the dog to something more positive or take him outside.
- Help a marking dog succeed by taking him to new and different areas on walks. This will encourage him to mark outside rather than in the home, but take care not to allow your dog to toilet in neighbors' yards and please be considerate to others by picking up any poop!
- In many cases, neutering can significantly reduce the desire to scent mark, but if a dog is a serial scent marker before neutering then surgery might not reduce the behavior completely.
- *Boredom* and lack of mental stimulation and physical exercise exacerbates marking behavior, so a daily schedule of activities that keep dogs occupied, along with good environmental management, is the perfect prescription for happier dogs and a cleaner home.
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