

# Urine Dribbling: Never EVER Punish Your Pet for This 'Accident'

It's easy to mistake this for a behavioral problem - when it may indeed be a medical issue. So punishing your pet for this 'accident' is a BAD idea. Discover the potential medical causes, including birth defects which can affect certain breeds and the symptom that requires immediate vet care.

**Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker**

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## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Involuntary passage of urine normally occurs while your pet is asleep or resting. It can be just a small wet spot or a good sized puddle, depending on how much urine is being unintentionally passed
- This is not a behavioral problem, it's a medical problem — so trying to correct or punish your pet is a bad idea on multiple levels
- The cause of your pet's urinary incontinence will dictate what treatment she receives. If your pet is diagnosed with hormone-induced urinary incontinence, I strongly recommend you consider attempting to treat the problem naturally

***Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published March 1, 2011.***

In this video, Dr. Karen Becker talks about the problem of urine dribbling in pets — the involuntary passage of urine. Listen as she discusses the most common causes of the condition, as well as the treatment options she recommends.

Please note this video addresses involuntary passage of urine only, and isn't intended to cover other urination-related problems like too-frequent urination or behavioral-related problems like submissive urination.

## Involuntary Passage of Urine

Involuntary passage of urine normally occurs while your pet is asleep or resting. When she stands up, you notice urine leakage. It can be just a small wet spot or a good sized puddle, depending on how much urine is being unintentionally passed.

Other times you might notice a problem, for example, when your pet jumps up on the couch and spills a bit of urine, or she dribbles while walking through the house or as she's running during play.

It's important to understand your pet isn't intentionally leaking urine. She has no control over what's happening. This is not a behavioral problem, it's a medical problem — so trying to correct or punish your pet is a bad idea on multiple levels.

In fact, many pets become very distressed to realize they are passing urine in places other than a designated potty spot. A housebroken dog or any kitty accustomed to using a litter box will be confused and even ashamed to know they are leaving urine in inappropriate spots.

So it's very important you treat urine dribbling as a medical problem requiring a medical diagnosis rather than a behavioral problem requiring behavior correction or worse, punishment. Your pet isn't aware she's leaking urine until after the fact, and she's probably as upset with the situation as you are.

## Causes of Urinary Incontinence

There are a lot of causes for involuntary passage of urine, especially in dogs.

- **Central nervous system trauma** — If your pet's brain or spinal cord isn't signaling correctly to the bladder, this miscommunication can cause urine dribbling.
- **Damage to the pudendal nerve** — This is a problem of the lower back in dogs — I see it often in my practice in older dogs with arthritis, degenerative joint disease or trauma to the lower back. If the pudendal nerve, which works the neck of your pet's bladder, is impinged, the bladder neck can remain slightly open, allowing urine leakage.
- **Disease of the bladder, kidneys or adrenals, Cushing's disease, hypothyroidism and diabetes** can all cause dribbling of urine.
- **Bladder stones** — A dog with a bladder stone will often strain while trying to urinate. He'll appear to successfully empty his bladder, but when he's back inside he'll continue to leak urine. If you've noticed this behavior with your pet, you need to consider the possibility of bladder stones.
- **Birth defects** — Structural abnormalities existing from birth — can cause incontinence. If your puppy has been difficult or impossible to houstrain, there could be a birth defect present. An example: the ureter — a tube that collects urine from the kidneys and passes it into the bladder — can bypass the bladder entirely and go directly to the urethra.

This plumbing problem, known as an ectopic ureter, will cause urine, as it's produced, to dribble right out of your pet's body.

Some dog breeds have more of these types of from-birth plumbing problems than others. Siberian Huskies, Miniature Poodles, Labradors, Collies, Westies, Wirehaired Fox Terriers and Corgis are more commonly diagnosed with ectopic ureters than other breeds. So if your puppy is leaking urine, you should investigate the possibility of a birth defect.

- **Urethral obstruction** — Obstruction of the urethra can also cause involuntary passage of urine. A tumor, for example, can obstruct urine flow and cause dribbling. So can urethral stones.

A stone in your pet's urethra is a medical emergency. You may notice along with urine leakage that your pet is in pain, seems stressed, and might even act panicked. This can be because she needs to empty her bladder and she can't. The bladder is filling up with urine and there's no way for her to relieve the mounting pressure.

You should seek veterinary care immediately if your pet seems to have pain along with incontinence, and especially if she's not able to pass any urine at all.

- **Age-related urinary incontinence** — Older pets can develop weak pelvic floors or poor bladder tone which can result in urine dribbling. If your dog has signs of canine senility or dementia, he can also simply forget to signal you when he needs to potty outside. His bladder can overflow, and there can be leakage.
- **Feline leukemia** — For reasons not well understood, some kitties positive for feline leukemia have urine leakage. If your cat starts dribbling urine, it is more than likely a medical issue requiring veterinary care.

## Hormone-Induced Urinary Incontinence

Hands down, the most common reason for involuntary urine leakage, especially in dogs, is hormone-induced urinary incontinence.

After a pet is spayed or neutered, the sex hormones estrogen and testosterone, which are necessary to help close the external urethral sphincter, are no longer available. This often results in urine dribbling.

Hormone-induced urinary incontinence is extremely common in spayed female dogs, and somewhat less common in neutered males. These are typically healthy, vibrant pets that just happen to dribble urine anywhere from multiple times a day to just once or twice a year.

## Treatment for Urinary Incontinence

The cause of your pet's urinary incontinence will dictate what treatment she receives. If there's an underlying disease process or structural abnormality causing the problem, and it can be corrected through medical management and/or surgery, that's obviously the way to go.

If your pet is diagnosed with hormone-induced urinary incontinence, I strongly recommend you consider attempting to treat the problem naturally.

At my Natural Pet Animal Hospital, we successfully treat cases of hormone-induced urinary incontinence with Standard Process glandular therapy, as well as natural, biologically appropriate (non-synthetic) hormone replacement therapy and a few excellent herbal remedies.

We also frequently use acupuncture to improve function of the pudendal nerve and control or stimulate sufficient closure of the external urethral sphincter. Chiropractic care can also keep the CNS working properly, aiding in normal bladder and neurologic function.

I urge you to start with natural remedies, because some of the traditional drugs used to treat urinary incontinence, specifically DES (diethylstilbestrol), are potentially toxic with side effects that can create more problems for your precious pet than the problem you set out to correct.

Synthetic hormone replacement drugs can cause some of the same problems in female dogs as they do in women who take them. If your pet is dribbling urine, you should work with your vet to determine what's causing the problem. As always, I recommend you have a **holistic vet** on your pet's treatment team.

Dogs with incontinence that can't be completely resolved can be fitted with dog bloomers or panties with absorbent pads — you can even use human disposable diapers and cut a hole for the tail. Just remember that urine is caustic and should not remain on your pet's skin for long periods, so if you use diapers, be sure to change them frequently or

remove them during times when your pet isn't apt to be incontinent.

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