

If You Have a Pet, You'll Have This – Are You Prepared?

It goes with pet ownership and at some point you'll have to deal with this nuisance, if you haven't already. Here's how to approach it for the best results and your own peace of mind.

Reviewed by [Dr. Becker](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- When a pet is relieving himself inappropriately indoors, it's important to address the root cause, which could be inadequate housetraining in the case of a dog, or litterbox issues with a kitty
- To discover where your pet has been relieving herself, walk through your darkened house with a black light, which will turn all urine stains — including the already dry and hidden ones — fluorescent green
- Successfully removing pet stains and odors requires a multistep process using the right tools and the right technique
- For the best outcome, it's advisable to use an enzyme-based cleaning product specifically designed to remove pet stains and smells
- Keep in mind that if you have a pet, it's inevitable that at some point you'll have a mess to clean up, so anticipate the occasional accident and be prepared with the right supplies on hand

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published July 22, 2018.

If your pet is piddling (or pooping) in places he shouldn't, for example, your floor or bed or other forbidden spots, it can be very frustrating, not to mention stinky and difficult to clean!

Fortunately, there's a root cause and a solution for almost every situation, and how you approach it depends on whether your furry friend is a dog or a cat. With a puppy or adult dog, the key to preventing accidents is proper housetraining. With cats of all ages, the best place to start is typically the litterbox.

First Things First: How to Discover Where Your Pet's Been Peeing

It's very important to get rid of urine odors for your own sanity, and also so your dog or cat won't continually return to the scene of the crime and reoffend. Often when a pet urinates somewhere in the house, no one notices right away because it's a small spot that dries quickly or it's somewhat hidden.

That's why it's a good idea to find out exactly where your dog or cat has been soiling. Believe it or not, the quickest way to do this is with a black light. Urine stains appear a lovely shade of neon green when illuminated with a black light, so darken your house and walk around shining the light on floors, baseboards and anywhere there are suspicious stains or smells.

Removing Urine Stains and Smells

For dried urine spots, treatment will depend on the type of surface you're dealing with. Hard materials such as tile, wood flooring and baseboards can be cleaned using a safe, natural solution like one part hydrogen peroxide and two parts water, or undiluted white vinegar.

Liberally spray the solution on the urine stain, wipe and repeat as often as necessary to eliminate any lingering odor. If the smell remains despite your best efforts, purchase an enzyme-based cleaner as described below and re-treat the area(s).

Cleaning carpeting, upholstery or another absorbent surface requires a bit more effort. Pet urine is composed of several different chemicals, strains of bacteria and other substances. And while natural cleaners like hydrogen peroxide, vinegar or baking soda can deal with some urine odors, they don't deal with them all.

That's why it's important to have an enzyme cleaner on hand to deal with the uric acid in urine stains. Take these steps to thoroughly clean urine stains and odors from carpets, rugs and other absorbent surfaces:

- If the spot is still wet, use paper towels or another absorbent material like a rag or cloth and blot up as much of the urine as possible before moving to step 2.
- Pour plain water over the spot and soak up the moisture, again using clean, white cloths or paper towels — continue blotting until no yellow appears on the towels.
- Saturate the spot with a commercially available enzyme-based "digester" solution and let it sit for the prescribed amount of time. Thoroughly saturate the soiled areas, including carpet padding, if you suspect the urine has soaked all the way through.
- Use more clean paper towels to blot up as much moisture as you can and then allow the spot to air-dry. Protecting the just-treated area is a good idea to prevent humans from walking through it and your pet from finding it and re-soiling. You can place aluminum foil loosely over the spots or use upside-down laundry baskets, bowls, baking sheets or similar items.

If the urine spot has been there awhile, you may need to repeat the last two steps at least once. Depending on the scope of the problem, be prepared to make this a multiweek project as you soak the spots, blot them, allow them to dry and then repeat the process as many times as necessary to completely remove stains and odor.

Cleaning Other Pet Messes

If your pet poops on your floor, with any luck she'll leave a nice, dry solid little mass, which you'll pick up cleanly with a tissue, and to your relief, it will leave no trace of itself on your carpet. Or not. If the mess leaves a small stain on your carpet, wipe or blot it gently using a damp paper towel or clean damp cloth, then perform steps 3 and 4 above.

If the mess is more extensive, for example from diarrhea or vomit, first scoop up as much of the solid or semi-solid material as possible using something flat like a piece of cardboard and discard. Try not to mash or spread the mess further during this process. Then perform steps 2 through 4 above.

Additional Suggestions

Do yourself a favor and do not make the mistake of using any old carpet-cleaning product you have on hand instead of a specialized pet formula. The products sold specifically for pet messes contain bacteria and enzyme digesters that are extremely effective at eliminating stains and odors in both carpet and padding, without damaging or discoloring most flooring materials.

If you try something else on the spot first, then use a specialized pet formula, you may not get the same good result you can achieve using the pet product only. Also, no matter how bad the stain may look or smell when you discover it, resist the urge to use a harsh scrubbing motion to remove the spot, as this can quickly destroy the texture of your carpet or rug, and scrubbing really isn't necessary.

If you're patient and follow the steps listed above for stain removal, even if you have to repeat the process a few times to get all the stain out, there's a very good chance you won't notice the spot after it dries thoroughly. Even light-colored carpeting and rugs can be returned to good condition with the right cleaning agent and technique.

Once the urine is completely removed from a spot your pet has repeatedly soiled, try applying a few drops of a pure essential oil (I've used lemon, tangerine and lavender) on the area as a deterrent.

Unfortunately, urine occasionally soaks all the way through carpet and padding into the subfloor. If you can't get rid of the smell despite all your best cleaning efforts, you may need to remove that area of carpet and padding, neutralize the odor with an oil-based, stain-blocking primer on the subfloor, and then replace the padding and carpet.

Final Thoughts

It's very important to remember that even after your pup is thoroughly housetrained or your kitty is an old pro with the litterbox, if you're a pet parent, you will have the occasional mess to clean up. Your dog may get a temporary bout of diarrhea or drink too much water and wait too long to be walked. Your cat may develop a urinary tract problem and urinate outside her box, or she may throw up a hairball.

Aging pets, just like elderly people, occasionally have a bathroom accident. It's a fact of life with pets, just as it is with children, that messes will happen. Once you've done all you can do to set your pet up for success, the only thing left is to anticipate the occasional accident and arm yourself with the supplies you'll need to do a thorough cleanup.
