



## Housetraining: *Preventing the Potty Blues*

In a shelter environment, it is especially difficult for us to say whether or not a dog is housetrained. Even in a previously-trained adult dog, confusion and mistakes are a part of transitioning so expect a few accidents and be prepared to **reinforce the right behavior in the right place!**

### Set Up a Routine

Give your new dog extra opportunities to go potty outside to make sure he is empty and ALWAYS accompany him to reinforce with a treat immediately after doing his business. **While housetraining, puppies up to 5 months old and seniors should have an opportunity to go at least once an hour while adult dogs should every 2-3 hours.** You also control the feeding so remember that a regular meal schedule will translate to a regular elimination schedule.

Typically a new dog will want to go potty:

- When he wakes up
- After mealtimes
- After vigorous exercise or play
- Every 2 – 3 hours (More frequently for Puppies / Seniors)
- Right before Bedtime



### Supervision

When you are at home, keep your dog in sight at all times. If you cannot 100% supervise, ensure your dog goes into his confinement space. If your dog is not yet fully housetrained and ends up having an accident while unattended, the likelihood is much higher you will not find it and the pattern will continue. If you are confining a puppy and anticipate leaving him alone LONGER than you've trained him, place a potty pad in the far end of the space so he has an *approved outlet*.

- Accompany dog to eliminate – go with him rather than sending him so that:
  - You know whether he's gone or not
  - You can reward at the right instant – praise and small food treat as he finishes!
- Go to the same spot to make it easier, or at least the same kind of surface
- Praise and reward all outdoor elimination for first week at least – later you can slack off, but it's more than okay to continue praising.
- Praise and reward every time he gets it right
- When accidents in the home happen, it can be frustrating but IGNORE it – in housetraining only the trainer has made the mistake. Clean all accidents thoroughly with an **enzymatic** cleanser (e.g. Nature's Miracle)

Note: **DO NOT PUNISH** – this is a common misconception and pitfall for many owners. Most importantly, never ever punish if the dog makes a mistake unsupervised - there is zero connection to the act that happened many dozens, hundreds or even thousands of behaviors ago! Punishment is not a good idea in early relationship with a new dog, and of dubious value at any time.

Once you have seen the dog begin to connect going potty in the right location...

- Add one extra room of house at a time every few days if dog is successful – supervise closely every time a room is added.
- Gradually extend the duration between opportunities, adding ~a half hour per week
- If he's gone several days without an accident, you may interrupt him ("Ah! Ah! Let's go outside!") at the *start* of any mistakes indoors then hustle him outside to finish. If he finishes outside, praise and reward this.
- It is reasonable to expect an adult dog to hold on 4 – 5 hours max. Many dogs *can* hold on longer but is it humane to make them?
- Sudden onset of indoor elimination in a trained dog may indicate a medical problem, so please be sure to consult your veterinarian immediately before getting behavior help.

It's important to remember that this isn't forever and you can and will be able to relax this management later. Keep in mind that it's very difficult to work backwards, so setup your friend to do his very best early on!

*Source: Content adapted from San Francisco Animal Care & Control*

