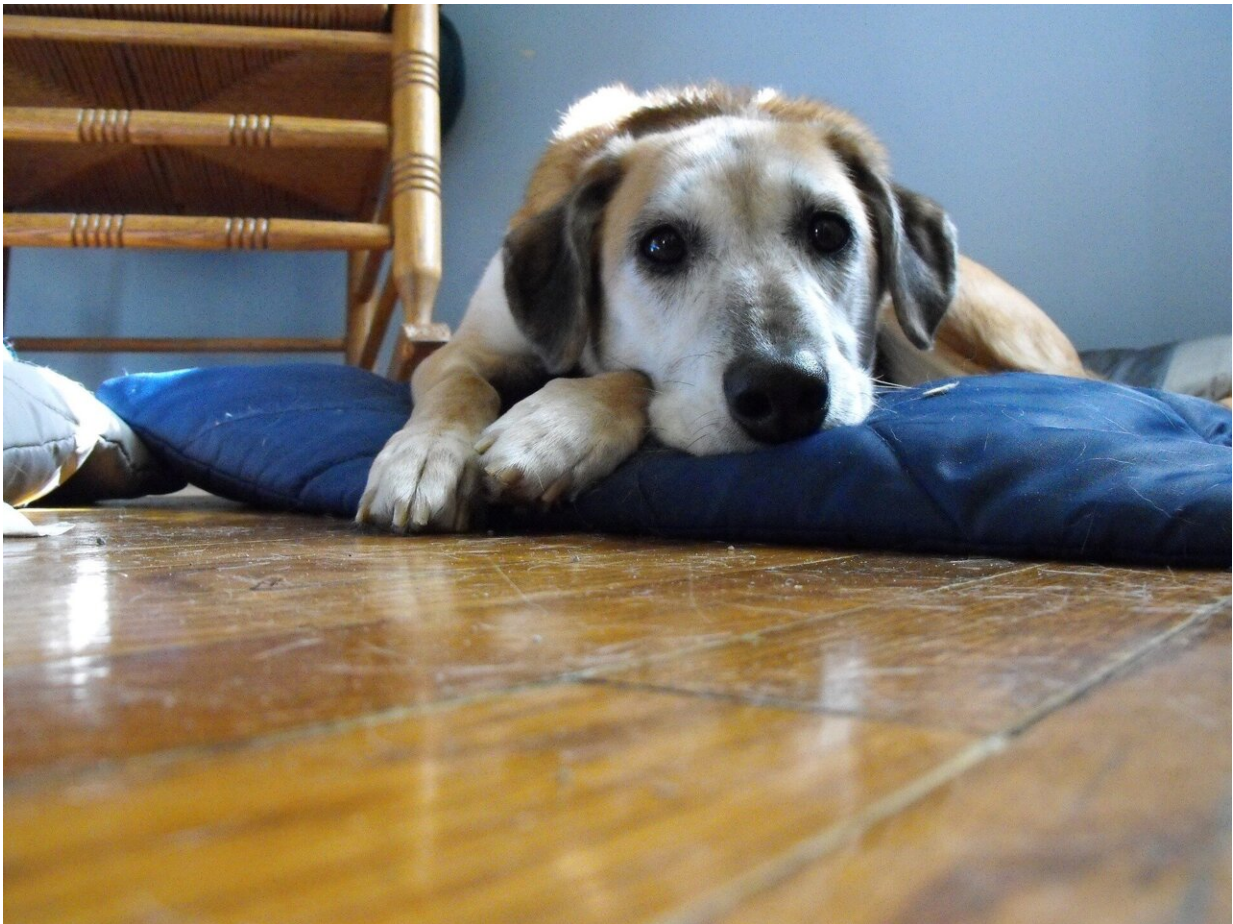


# Spotting the difference between urine marking and urinary problems in pets

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Once pets have learned to urinate where it is appropriate, whether it is

outdoors or in their litter box, it can be frustrating for owners when their pet urinates elsewhere in the house. While your first instinct may be to reprimand them for the unwanted behavior, you should first consider if they are simply marking or if there is a bigger health concern at play.

Urine marking, a [natural behavior](#) for dogs and cats, is when pets release small amounts of [urine](#) in multiple places, whether it is on new objects in the home or their favorite spot. Marking typically occurs when pets are relieving stress or signaling ownership of their territory to other animals.

Urinary diseases, on the other hand, are an unwanted and often painful experience for pets that will most likely require veterinary attention. But because urinary diseases result in increased urination, similar to urine marking, it can be difficult for owners to spot the difference between the two.

Dr. Genna Atiee, a clinical assistant professor in small animal [internal medicine](#) at the Texas A&M School of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, says owners can differentiate between urine marking or urinary diseases by keeping a watchful eye on their pet's bathroom habits.

## **Signs of urinary health concerns**

"There are some easy things to tip an owner off that something is medically wrong, such as blood in the urine, visible pushing or straining to urinate, crying out in pain when peeing, unpleasant-smelling urine, or urinating near the door or around the litter box," Atiee explained.

"Increased drinking can also indicate that there is a kidney problem," Atiee continued. "Kidneys are responsible for maintaining water balance by pulling water out of what they filter from the blood, leaving waste in the urine behind. But when the kidneys lose function, they can no longer

pull water effectively, so pets have to drink more to avoid dehydration and urinate more as a result."

Additionally, the amount of urine a pet releases at one time can help differentiate the type of urinary disease.

"Dogs and cats with inflammation in the [lower urinary tract](#), such as the bladder or urethra, may urinate frequently in small amounts," Atiee said. "On the other hand, dogs and cats with [kidney disease](#) may urinate large volumes of urine because they cannot filter urine appropriately."

## **Visiting the vet for urine testing**

If an owner notices symptoms of a urinary problem or is concerned about their pet's peeing habits, Atiee encourages them to take their pet to their veterinarian because a urine test can reveal whether there is a health concern.

"A urinalysis can show us many things," Atiee said. "For example, how concentrated the urine is, as a low concentration can indicate the kidneys are not working well; if there is evidence of infection or inflammation; what the pH of the urine is because a high pH can indicate a urinary condition like UTIs or [kidney stones](#); if there is protein in the urine; and sometimes even show us evidence of cancer."

## **Urine marking prevention**

Once the vet has ruled out any [medical conditions](#) causing a pet to urinate more frequently, owners can consider behavioral training for marking, as this can help them spot abnormal bathroom behavior in the future that may be the result of a medical issue. Atiee specifically suggests that owners work with a veterinary behaviorist or reputable

trainer in order to change marking behavior.

"Marking is a very disruptive behavior that can lead to resentment and unnecessary expenses if marking ruins furniture, carpet, or hardwood floors, which may result in an owner altering the living situation of their pet, either moving them outside or by rehoming them," Atiee said.

"A behaviorist or trainer may be able to help alter this behavior, preserving the human-animal bond. Veterinary behaviorists have achieved board-certification in the specialty of veterinary behavior, so an owner can look for a veterinarian who is specialized in that field."

Another way to prevent dogs or cats from marking include using products that are intended to smell unappealing to pets, typically containing scents such as citrus or mint. Atiee recommends owners carefully use these products as they may be irritating to animals who are sensitive.

Understanding the difference between marking and urinary health concerns when pets pee more than usual can prevent any urinary diseases from worsening. Nevertheless, both urine marking and urinary problems should be treated so that your pet can live a stress-free and healthy lifestyle.

Provided by Texas A&M University

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