



Cleaning Pet Stains and Odors

Everyone makes mistakes, pets included. If your dog or cat urinates or defecates where you didn't want them to, part of dealing with it is making sure you're cleaning up entirely. Animals can still detect odors even after we don't notice them anymore, so you need to clean thoroughly, using an enzymatic cleaner especially designed to remove these scent marks. If the odor is detectable to your pet, it will encourage them to use that spot for elimination again.

To find fresh stains, you'll be able to use your eyes or nose. It's easiest to remove odors sooner rather than later. **To find older areas**, you can use a black light (sold in pet stores for this purpose). Just turn off all the lights in the room and point your black light all around. Use chalk to mark any stains you find before you turn the lights back on.

Cleaning Carpets or Upholstery

- ◆ Soak up as much urine as you possibly can. Use cleaning towels, paper towels, and/or newspaper. Place them over the wet spot and stand on it, pressing down all over to draw as much liquid out as possible. Replace the towels as necessary. (You can place one of the soaked towels in your pet's appropriate potty area to encourage them to use it.) If you can, put more newspaper under the carpet or upholstery as well.
- ◆ Once the area is just barely damp, rinse it well with cool water—no chemical cleaners of any kind. After rinsing, remove as much water as you can with more blotting or with a wet vacuum, shop vacuum, or extractor.
- ◆ If you've used chemical cleaners on the area in the past, you want to remove those before you use an enzymatic cleaner; the enzymes will work best on pet odors if they're not working on other substances as well. Consider renting a wet vacuum or extractor from the hardware store to use with just water, not with cleaning products of any kind.
- ◆ Once the area is as clean as possible, you can use a specially designed enzymatic odor neutralizer, which you can find at pet-supply stores. Follow the directions carefully, and check the area first for staining or color fastness.
- ◆ If you can still see a stain after you've followed all the previous steps including odor neutralization, you can use a carpet stain remover.
- ◆ If urine has soaked all the way through the carpet to the padding, the odor may be very difficult to remove. You may need to replace that portion of carpet or padding.

Washable Items

- ◆ Add a pound of baking soda to your regular detergent and wash as usual. Until you know the odor has been removed, it's best to air-dry these items. If the odor or stain remains after washing, use an enzymatic odor neutralizer in the next wash, following the instructions carefully.

Walls and Floors

- ◆ If the acid in urine has discolored your wood floors, baseboards, or walls, you may need to strip and replace a layer of paint or varnish. Get advice from your local hardware or building-supply store for appropriate removers and how-to information.
- ◆ Some paints or wallpapers are washable; you can test an enzymatic cleaner in an inconspicuous area to see if it will work without damage.

What Not to Use

- ◆ Chemical cleaners, especially those with strong scents like ammonia and vinegar, could actually encourage your pet to re-mark the area.
- ◆ Steam cleaners can actually set the odor permanently with heat and should be avoided.

For additional information on housetraining your pet, see the following Sacramento SPCA Behavior handouts:

- ◆ “Housetraining Your Dog or Puppy”
- ◆ “Dealing with Litter Box Problems”

For more information on behavior and training for dogs and cats, please visit our web site at www.sspca.org/pet-carebehavior/.