

Successful Cleaning to Remove Pet Odors and Stains

Has your pet urinated or defecated in your house, leaving “scent marks” on your floor or furniture? To keep your pet from continuing to eliminate in these areas of your house, you will need to thoroughly clean the soiled areas.

- Find all soiled areas using your nose and eyes. A black-light bulb is a helpful tool that will usually show even old urine stains, due to the fact that the urine contains fluorescent molecules that glow. To use a black-light bulb simply turn out all lights in the room and scan all areas of the room. Once you have identified the soiled areas, lightly outline them with chalk.
- Once located, clean the soiled areas appropriately to remove the odors (see below).

Methods to Avoid

You should avoid using steam cleaners to clean urine odors from carpet or upholstery. The heat will set the odor and stain in by bonding the proteins into any man-made fibers. You should also avoid using cleaning chemicals, especially those with strong odors, such as ammonia or vinegar. From your pet’s perspective, these don’t effectively eliminate or cover the urine odor and may actually encourage your pet to urinate in the area again.

To Clean Washable Items

- Soak the item in an enzymatic cleaner, found at your local pet supply stores. Read and follow the instructions carefully, testing a small area for staining first.
- Machine wash as usual. If possible, it’s best to air dry these items.
- If you can still see the stain, use a stain remover and then wash again.
- Once washed, keep the items away from your pet. If you can’t move an item, like the couch for instance, then a good way to discourage your pet from soiling on it is to cover the piece of furniture with a vinyl, flannel-backed tablecloth. They’re machine washable, inexpensive, and unattractive to your pet.

To Clean Carpeted Areas and Upholstery

- Soak up as much of the urine as possible with a combination of newspaper and paper towels. The more fresh urine you can remove before it dries, especially from carpet, the simpler it will be to remove the odor. Place a thick layer of paper towels on the wet spot and cover that with a thick layer of newspaper. Stand on this padding for about a minute. Remove the padding and repeat until the area is barely damp.
- Rinse the “accident zone” thoroughly with clean, cool water. After rinsing, remove as much of the water as possible by blotting or by using a “wet-vac,” “shop-vac,” or “extractor”.
- Once the area is really clean, you should then use a high-quality enzymatic cleaner available at pet supply stores. Read and follow the instructions carefully, testing the affected area for staining first.
- However, if you’ve previously used a non-enzymatic cleaner, a steamer, or chemicals of any kind on the area, then enzymatic cleaners won’t be effective. Even if you haven’t used chemicals recently, any trace of a non-protein-based substance will weaken the effect of the enzymatic cleaner. The cleaner will use up its “energy” on the old cleaners instead of on the protein stains you want removed. In order to effectively clean these areas you will want to clean them again, using an oxidizing cleaner, also found at pet supply stores, which will break up any residue left behind by the old cleaners or chemicals used.
- To verify that you effectively cleaned the soiled area, scan the area with a black-light bulb.
- If the area no longer glows, but still looks stained after it’s completely dry from extracting and neutralizing, try any good carpet stain remover.

- If urine has soaked down into the padding underneath your carpet, your job will be more difficult. You may need to remove and replace that portion of the carpet and padding.
- Using the suggestions in our aversives, positive reinforcement, and house soiling handouts, make the “accident zone” unattractive, the appropriate “bathroom area” attractive, and teach your pet where you want him to eliminate instead. Remember, it took time to build the bad habit, and it will take time to replace that habit with a new, more acceptable behavior. Be patient and give your pet a lot of encouragement!

To Clean Floors and Walls

If the wood on your furniture, walls, baseboard, or floor is discolored, then the varnish or paint has been affected by the acid in the urine. You may need to remove and replace the layer of varnish or paint. Employees at your local hardware or building supply store can help you identify and match your needs with appropriate removers and replacements. Washable enamel paints and some washable wallpapers, may respond favorable to enzymatic cleaners. Read the instructions carefully before using products and test in an invisible area.