

REASONS WHY YOUR DOG IS SCENT-MARKING

Scent-marking behaviour (SMB) in dogs (Canis familiaris) is defined as sniffing marks left by other dogs and urinating on the landmark¹, defecating, or releasing glandular secretions over it.^{2,3}

Gender



Males mark more than females

Male dogs were shown to scent-mark more than female dogs in general². In free-ranging dogs, researchers found that by scent marking, males establish their territory because they were observed to mark along their boundary³. Females marked near feeding and foraging areas where they can protect their pups and food sources. However, both genders had higher urination rates when they are in an unknown territory, suggesting that this is a way for them to familiarize themselves in the area³.



Age



Senior dogs mark more than adult and juveniles



Dogs more than 8 years old (senior) had a higher urination rate than dogs aged 16 months to 8 years old (adult) and dogs younger than 16 months (juvenile) according to a study conducted in two shelters in New York. Researchers suggest that urination rate increases because of their age or undiagnosed kidney disorder. The latter statement is in need for further investigation.⁶

Castration status



Castrated dogs mark less than non-castrated dogs

Intact male dogs had a higher urination rate than castrated dogs but there wasn't a significant difference between intact and castrated females.⁴

After neutering (removal of gonads) males showed a 50-70% decline in urination rate⁷.

However, the female urination rate wasn't affected by spaying them. Marking in castrated males was still higher than intact females indicating that it is more important to males than females.⁴

 70%

Time of the year



Higher marking during monsoon

During the late monsoon (September to November), the peak period of mating, a higher rate of marking behaviour is observed in both genders. Alpha males – the most dominant male – displayed the highest marking rate mostly on estrous (in heat) females to establish their dominance. Females on the other hand, had the highest urination rate in the winter (December to January) during the peak period of pup rearing. This suggests that territory is more important for males and pup-rearing is for females.

Gender of the walker



Marking behaviour is higher with women.

Male dogs have a higher rate of marking when they are accompanied by an unfamiliar woman than an unfamiliar man. This may be due to female hormones detected by male dogs believing there's a female dog nearby, but this warrants further studies. Female dogs' marking behaviour isn't affected by the sex of the walker⁸. This pattern holds true with or without leash⁹.

