

Ask A Vet: Dribbling Doggie

Sunday, February 12, 2017

Dear Dr. Weldy's,

I have an eight year old spayed female Labrador that has been recently urinating on the bed and sometimes on the floor. Is this a behavior thing since she has never done this before? I did just recently have my daughter and grandkids move in. Is this her way of getting back at me for strangers living in the house when we have been the only two for the past seven years?

-Fit to be tied

Dear Fit,

Although we sometimes do see animals act out over new smells to cover the scent of other animals they smell on your clothes from other places, this does not sound like one of those times. I do see my hunting dogs (both female) urinate over the top of another animals urine spot but again this is not the situation you are describing. My dog will smell my work clothes when I get home from the vet office, but she does not mark them with urine.

In this situation I believe it to be a urinary incontinence issue (inability to hold urine). Urinary incontinence often can occur after a female dog is spayed and the onset can be anything from immediately after surgery to up to ten years later. The most consistent sign of this problem is night time urination also known as nocturia. This can sometimes just be a transient thing (temporarily after spaying for example) to very severe in nature. There tends to be more risks of it happening in larger breed dogs, such as your Labrador, as compared to say a small breed like a poodle. This also is not exclusive to females; we often will see this in male dogs as well.

Sometimes we see a decreased size of the urethral tube (the outflow tract from the bladder where urine escapes) due to diseases such as: intervertebral disk disease, degenerative myelopathy (referring to anything that affects the spinal cord), trauma (hit by car), and malformations of spine as seen in Manx cats or rarely a malfunction in the autonomic nervous system called dysautonomia.

The exact cause of this is not very clear. We used to think it was hormonal due to estrogen deficiency but studies show that concentrations are similar between incontinent spayed females and continent dogs not in season. We know estrogen can help increase pressure of the urethral sphincter and therefore lesson incontinence. They have also documented weakened urethral muscle when looking at muscle type 1 fibers in the muscle of the spayed female as well as reduced numbers of fibers.

Diagnosing this is based on history, breed of animal and absence of other factors such as a simple bladder infection easily controlled with antibiotics and anti-inflammatory, and doing urinalysis and blood work to rule out kidney disease. Most of these true incontinent issues can be managed very well with drugs. Before getting rid of that faithful friend, schedule that appointment with your vet and embrace those golden years with your pet.

-Dr. Wanda Schmeltz