



Everything I Know About Poop

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Put two dog trainers at one dinner table and somewhere between appetizers and dessert the talk will turn to poop. Oh let's be honest. The topic is going to come up before soup is served.

It's inevitable. Try as you might, a relentless tide will carry the conversation in this direction. You might as well swim upstream as eat with other dog people and not talk about feces.

Well I recall one of the best "dog dinners" of my life as I sat at an IACP banquet table wedged between Mary Mazzeri, a longtime friend and dog trainer and Wendy Volhard, then a new friend and an awesome resource on nearly all dog related subjects. Just the other side of Wendy sat Leyla, a dog breeder from Turkey who was attending our conference.

We were all dressed up, enjoying cocktails and terrific company.

"Leyla," I said between bites of crudité, "with a hundred and twenty five German Shepherds in your kennel, what do you do about stress diarrhea?"

The second it was out of my mouth I realized that I should probably not be asking women in ball gowns to talk poop. I tried to back peddle and give Leyla an out.

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“Oh honey,” she shook her head. “we’re all dog people here. Let me tell you about poop. We feed Wendy’s dog food formula and so we almost never have diarrhea in the kennels. At dinner we get the Poop Report for the day. We’ll be eating and looking it over and saying between mouthfuls, ‘Hmm, good poop today.’ “

Leyla concluded, “My maid has a third grade education, but I think she has a PhD in s***.”

So now I know I’m not a cretin. I’m just interested, as are you, in poop. Poop is an important indicator of health. Made in the right place, it is also an indicator of good manners. Many of my clients are critically concerned about their dogs’ elimination habits because some dogs do this in the home.

As I tell you everything I know about poop, I want to first state that I owe much of what I know to a generous group of people who, over the years, have shared their expertise in this matter. So I owe it all to them. They know who they are. But I think they would rather be placed in the Witness Protection program than be thanked here by name.

One of many caveats to come: by no means am I a veterinarian, nor is this article intended to replace the advice, counsel or assistance of licensed medical personnel. I am a long time dog trainer, both teacher and student in all things Dog. But when I am flummoxed or worried, I go right to the vet with my poop problems. And so should you. Also, I do not recommend any illegal dispensing of prescription drugs of any kind. I do not do it, nor should you. The remedies dispensed in this article are intended to help dog owners and dog professionals remedy poop problems that fall into the realm of owner treatable.

Of all the types of bad poop, diarrhea tops the list. It can indicate any number of health issues. It can come from a rapid change in food, an imbalance of the flora in the gut, the presence of parasites, stress, disease and other unhappy conditions. Persistent diarrhea is not something to mess about with literally or figuratively. If dietary improvements and/or psychological treatments do not quickly yield improvements, see your vet.

BLOODY DIARRHEA is the worst form of poop ever invented. Blood can be bright red, which indicates that it is coming from near the end of the tract. Or it can be dark brown which indicates that it originates from deeper within the system. In either case, if I am seeing what appears to be more than a few drops, I’m off to the vet.

I will go to the vet quite quickly if diarrhea is accompanied by vomiting because dehydration can swiftly set in. The combination of vomiting and diarrhea can also indicate some serious health issues including the ingestion of a foreign object. But with just a few drops of blood and no vomiting, some people report reversing the problem with the following approach, assuming the cause is not parasites.

Tylan (generic name tylosin) is an antibiotic with colon calming properties. It is the active ingredient in those pet treats used to prevent rust stains from forming on the eyes of white toy dogs. One common brand name for this treat is called Angel Eyes. Rust stains on the eyes are generally caused by low level infection in the tear ducts and the treats clear those infections.

Tylan is the treatment of choice in some countries the way prescription Metranidazole is often the treatment of choice in the US. However, in the US, use of Tylan for diarrhea in dogs is “off label,” although it is used in fowl and swine. Therefore I make no representation that it is legal for you to give in your locale.

According to Wikipedia: “Tylosin has been used to treat a variety of different diseases throughout the world. Differing formulations and licensing conditions will mean that it may not be a recognized method of treatment for certain conditions in certain countries. In general, tylosin is licensed for the treatment of infections caused by organisms susceptible to the drug, but it has also been used as a treatment of colitis in small animals...”

VetInfo.com says about Tylan, “It's efficient in healing diarrhea caused by colitis and intestinal problems. It also has anti-inflammatory properties, which can act as an irritation reducer in the large intestine.” It also states: Tylosin has negligible side effects, and this is why vets recommend it for diarrhea. In case your dog is allergic to antibiotics such as erythromycin, Tylosin is likely to cause negative reactions. Tylan may create intestinal problems in sensitive dogs.”

Pure Tylan can be purchased online without a prescription. People who buy it place a mere pinch (1/8th teaspoon) in the center of a small canned food meatball and they give it to a 50 lb. dog. Skipping one meal is advisable although water access should be maintained. A second “Tylan meatball” can reportedly be given at the time of the next meal, 12 hours later. Other people may use the Angel Eyes supplement instead of actual Tylan powder. However, it could take a much larger dose to be effective. The actual meal fed to dogs with any form of diarrhea would best be comprised of a 50/50 mixture of rice and cooked lean meat. I will give the recipe in more detail below.

NON-BLOODY DIARRHEA caused by simple digestive upset is the most common form of liquid poop and can be treated, when caught early on, by almost anyone caring for dogs, including owners. Some people report best success by skipping up to 24 hours of food, but maintaining water access. Personally, I do not like to skip a meal unless my initial efforts fail.

I simply feed the dog approximately one half of his normal ration, and this meal consists of a 50/50 mixture cooked white rice with cooked (and drained) ground lean turkey. Generally speaking this will bind a dog up in a single meal, perhaps two. As soon as the dog has gone 24 hours without squirting, I begin to up the ration to 100% of the normal

food quantity, but composed completely of the aforementioned diet. And a day or so later, I begin to mix in, and transition back to, the normal food.

One really handy shortcut works well for me 90% of the time. Instead of cooking ground turkey, I mix the rice with chicken based canned dog food. Fancy cans don't seem to work well for this purpose. Surprisingly, Costco canned chicken dog food works very well. And the mixture of rice and canned food is very palatable to dogs. I call this Diarrhea Diet. In those rare instances where it doesn't work, I'll use turkey instead of canned food, and that usually fixes the problem. If it doesn't stop the flow within a reasonable time, I'll go to the vet. But I don't often have to do that.

RICE IS A GOOD BINDING AGENT but it is critical to add real cooked rice, not instant. Many of my clients think rice doesn't work because they've used it wrong. Only properly cooked rice will work. Uncle Ben's isn't going to do it. I keep a rice steamer in my dog training center. I only need to add rice and water, then push a button to perfectly cook a big container.

When buying uncooked rice, you'll find many varieties available. I have the best luck with medium or short grain rice which I *do not rinse before cooking*. The long grain type does not seem to be as "sticky," nor does it bind as well. A properly cooked batch of rice for this purpose will be neither dry nor dripping wet when cooked. It will stick to your fingers, and be a bit moister than what you'd want to serve your family. You want it to come out of the bowl in moist clumps, not easily separating into individual grains. It's easy to achieve this consistency by using slightly more water than called for in package directions. About 10% more water is a good guide. If you're really in a hurry, run to the nearest Chinese restaurant and buy a couple large takeout containers of their steamed white rice. It is perfect. If you keep cooked rice for too long, it will begin to dry out and un-clump. When it starts to separate into individual grains, it is time to throw it out.

SOFT POOP is a warning sign that bad things might happen soon if you don't attend to the dog. At the first sign of poop which looks unformed (think soft serve ice cream), I reduce the dog's ration by 25% and make up the difference with rice as a binding agent. However, I don't normally need to do this for more than two meals before poop once again becomes well formed. Then I begin to subtract the rice and add back the normal food over the next several meals.

CANNED PUMPKIN CAN BE USED AS A BINDING AGENT although it works better for some dogs than others. Certain dogs find it highly palatable. Others do not. Pumpkin contains a lot of fibre which helps many dogs create firmer stool.

When using pumpkin to firm up stool, make sure to buy 100% canned pumpkin, not pumpkin pie mix which contains other ingredients. For a 50 pound dog, add a heaping tablespoon to the normal ration. I occasionally meet dogs who, no matter how you

adjust their diet, constantly have soft stool. If such a dog responds well to pumpkin, you can use it for life.

Other binding agents can help firm up soft stool. For outright squitters, Diarrhea Diet is my immediate remedy. But there are a couple of other supplements you can add to food to stop soft stool from deteriorating to watery.

PSYLLIUM HUSK POWDER can be purchased at health food stores and added to dog food. It is used for colonic health in humans. It doesn't take much to tighten up a dog, and in fact, too much can be counterproductive. I use roughly half a teaspoon for a 50 pound dog.

It is important to note that psyllium husk is very dry and readily absorbs water. Therefore, you must mix it with a liberal amount of water and pour this over the food so that the powder does not adhere to and swell up in the dog's throat. Feces produced with psyllium husk will have a gelatinous quality that is better than having soft poop. However, it should only be used to gain control in order to be quickly phased out.

Psyllium husk is easy to keep and lasts a long time on the shelf. I would only use it in instances where rice is not readily available. It has no flavor so dogs do not notice or care about its presence.

METAMUCIL CONTAINS PSYLLIUM HUSK AS THE MAIN INGREDIENT so if you find the pure powder difficult to locate, you can purchase Metamucil at the pharmacy. It comes in a variety of formulas, all of which contain ingredients other than psyllium husk. Most formulas include sugar or artificial sweetener and flavorings. I'm not particularly opposed to flavoring, but avoid artificial sweeteners as some of them are reputed to be poisonous to dogs.

If using psyllium husk or Metamucil, always remember to mix it in water, and to use very little lest you provoke bowel irritation which will result not only in diarrhea, but bloody diarrhea at that. All that being said, used correctly, either of these two agents can quickly reverse soft poop. Metamucil has a sweet flavor unless you source the unflavored formula in which case it is neutral. Dogs either like it or aren't bothered by it. Metamucil will produce the same gelatinous poop as psyllium husk.

CLAY ISN'T JUST FOR MAKING POTTERY. Bentonite Clay deposits are commonly found in the Great Plains region of North America. Indigenous people have been ingesting small quantities of it for thousands of years for its digestive properties. It is now sold in health food stores as a "detoxification" agent. While I do not know if it has detox benefits, I do know that it can be used to firm soft stool. In some instances, it can also halt diarrhea in its tracks, particularly if administered very early on.

Bentonite clay is sold in two forms: powder to which you add water or suspended in liquid. I much prefer the liquid version which already has water added. Be sure to shake

the bottle well and either add a teaspoon or two to a bit of drinking water for a 50 pound dog, or pour it right over his food. Even when using liquid clay, be sure to add water to the food so that it doesn't thicken in the dog's throat. If using powder, sprinkle a tiny pinch over the food and add water, or mix the powder into drinking water. You can use it twice a day for a couple of days. Dogs seem to find it palatable. I've seen dogs drink clay water when they didn't even want plain tap water.

Bentonite clay will perform a miracle on some dogs. Poop either stops temporarily until the tract stabilizes, or bad poop turns into good poop quickly. I find it more useful in instances where there is no blood. Also, it doesn't seem to work for every dog. In fact, it's hit or miss. But when it hits, it hits the bullseye. When it misses there are no additional ill effects other than time lost that could have been used by another remedy.

Clay poop is distinctive in its darkness. Sometimes it is almost black. Be careful not to become exuberant and use too much. If a small amount doesn't work, you're better off switching approaches. Using too much clay could potentially bind up the dog far longer than you intend.

CLEAR MUCUS IN THE POOP indicates a problem, but it is not necessarily serious. Causes can include overeating, a food allergy or the presence of parasites. If your dog has stolen and indulged in people food and then passes stool with mucus, you might simply want to skip the next meal. Then reduce the following meal by 25%. Providing the poop quickly returns to normal, then you can resume normal feeding.

If the presence of mucus is accompanied by redness, swelling or itching anywhere on the dog's body then you will want to see the vet to look for allergic reactions. Sometimes treatment may be called for. Or perhaps your vet will advise a simple change in diet to avoid ingredients to which your dog has become sensitive. You may wish to try a "limited ingredient diet" found at pet stores because these formulas reduce the number of ingredients which sometimes disturb the digestion.

A regular fecal exam by the vet will insure your dog does not suffer from intestinal parasites. However, if you have not had this exam lately, and if your dog passes mucus with any regularity, it is time to see the vet.

YELLOW MUCUS IN THE STOOL IS POTENTIALLY MORE SERIOUS and should trigger a visit to the vet. Causes likely include intestinal infection, parasites or irritable bowel syndrome.

DIET IS A CRITICAL FACTOR AFFECTING POOP QUALITY. Some dogs make quality poop even on foods that contain very low quality ingredients and contain a high percentage of fillers. While I believe it is important to slowly transition those dogs to a higher quality diet, this article is intended to help you triage bad poop and improve it quickly. But I would be remiss if I didn't beg you to research dog foods and find credible

sources so you can read reviews. Here, I will only mention the food issues that I find unavoidable when confronting bad poop.

If I am asked to board and train a dog who has chronic bouts of bad poop, not necessarily every day, but on and off, I am going to change that dog's food. It might even be a perfectly good food. But not for *that* dog. Poop tells you if the digestive tract is happy or angry. I never argue with poop.

When changing foods to improve poop, I seek formulas which do not contain corn, byproducts, bran or soy. This is a personal preference based on my experience with a huge array of dog foods. That being said, there are a few brands of foods which do contain corn and byproducts yet still produce great looking dogs who make great looking poop. So if your dog eats ingredients on my no-no list, but he looks and poops well, you can leave his food alone. But if he has unhappy poop, make the change and avoid those ingredients.

YES POOP HAS AN ODOR, but seriously, it's not supposed to be sticky and overly foul. That may be hard to believe, but it's true. Any kennel operator who feeds a variety of dogs on a variety of foods knows that some dogs produce much nastier smelling poop than others. Typically those dogs are being fed a cheaper diet. When that is not the case, it may be beneficial to change the protein source or brand of the dog's food. Not every dog will do well on chicken, lamb or beef. Texture also counts. If you can't scrape it off the pooper scooper, it's not well formed. Sticky poop is not happy poop. Generally, this is a dietary issue that can be improved with an upgrade. A proper piece of feces will roll off the scooper rather than stick.

REGULAR FLATULENCE IS NOT NORMAL. Although the common fart is not a specific focus of this article, it bears mentioning that these evil winds are your dog's way of telling you that his digestive system is being caused to work too hard to process his meals. Sadly, many people believe that flatulence is just part of living with a dog. It is not a requirement of dog ownership to tolerate those room clearing smells. If your dog is consistently producing ripe odors, upgrade his food. Chances are his tummy and your family will thank you. Put yourself in his position. Aren't you most likely to experience the same problem when you eat junk food or difficult to digest items?

RAW FOOD CAN SOMETIMES BE THE CURE FOR CHRONIC POOP ISSUES. This statement, like many that I have made prior, is controversial. Some vets recommend strongly against raw foods. Others feed it to their dogs. The same can be said of breeders, trainers and pet owners. You will not find consistent agreement on this point. However, my own experience is that raw food is sometimes the only cure.

Case in point. My German Shepherd, Sheena, was rescued at the age of one and a half. She had been severely starved and nearly died. I put her on a combination of high quality kibble mixed with canned food. She loved it, but only gained weight to a point. Every two to three weeks she blew bloody diarrhea for several days at a time, losing

weight in the process. The vet and I ran through every option including many rounds of Metranidazole and diet changes. Nothing helped.

My vet is a believer in raw foods and with her consent I changed Sheena to raw food which contains a fair proportion of bone and cartilage in relation to meat. All poop problems resolved instantly. Her poop is now small and firm. The quantity is tiny compared to any dog of her size eating any brand of kibble. If left in the sun for any length of time, her poop turns white and breaks up into powder. That's because she's excreting mostly digested bone. The other ingredients are being almost totally absorbed into her system.

Second case in point. I trained a happy Beagle named Morgan. She had normal looking poop. The problem was it would fall out of her at the most inopportune moments and places. After working with her for weeks it became clear that she had limited warning that she had to poop. Switching foods did not work until we switched to raw. Like Sheena, Morgan's problems quickly resolved. The volume of her stool radically declined and she could control when and where she made it.

DO YOUR RESEARCH ABOUT RAW FOOD. I am not attempting to sway you into feeding raw. I am merely pointing out my experience suggests that for some few dogs, it is the only sensible option for best poop and best health. An added bonus is that not only is raw food poop small and firm, but it barely has any odor at all. You will have to decide for yourself if you agree. Read everything you can on the subject, pro and con. The internet is your friend.

TRANSITIONING TO A NEW FOOD CAN BE TRICKY OR IT CAN BE SIMPLE. When I change a dog to a properly balanced raw food, I simply start the new food 12 hours after the last meal of the old. Never mix raw food with kibble as a transition. The cooked food digests much slower than raw. The only time I ever tried mixing the two, my dog become temporarily impacted. I noticed that when I feed him completely raw or completely cooked, he's fine. When I mixed the two I was disregarding the conventional wisdom I found in my research. I recommend you listen better than I did that time.

It is far more common to change from one form of cooked food, canned or kibble, to another. In this case, do it over the course of ten days. Start with 90% of the old food and 10% of the new. Feed that ratio for both the morning and evening meal on day one. On day two, change to 80% old food and 20% new. Continue the transition until on day ten you're feeding only the new food.

OVERFEEDING CAN CAUSE CHRONIC SOFT OR LIQUID POOP. Some owners don't even realize they are overfeeding their dog. Next time you're at the vet's office, ask for a frank evaluation of your dog's weight. Sometimes the key to good poop is as simple as cutting back a bit.

DIET MAY BE A FACTOR FOR DOGS WHO POOP IN THE HOUSE. Sometimes there is a dietary component to the behavior. A food loaded with fillers is going to produce greater volume and frequency of poop than a more digestible food. Many people do not realize that an adult dog should not produce three or four voluminous poops per day. It would be more typical for an adult dog on a good food to make one or two movements per day. If I have a housebreaking problem with a dog, I'm going to read that ingredient list looking for no-no's. If I find them, I will recommend a transition to a new food.

I can't tell you how often owners have told me their dog poops in the house "when he's angry at me." I hate to tell you this, but he's pooping in the house either because he doesn't know better or because he's bursting with so much poop that he can't help it. Good food in the right quantity produces good poop, and with education, in the right places.

YOU MAY WANT TO SUPPLEMENT WITH ENZYMES. Undigested food in the stool can have several causes. Poop should smell like poop. But if your dog's feces smells more like his food than poop, it may be passing through his system largely or partially undigested. If you're feeding a diet stuffed with my list of no-no's (corn, by products, bran and soy), consider switching. Otherwise your dog may simply not be producing enough enzymes to efficiently digest his food.

Processing and cooking kills the enzymes naturally found in foods. Human saliva contains additional enzymes which is why we learned in health class that digestion begins in the mouth. But in dogs, digestion begins in the stomach. The dog's pancreas, like ours, produces additional enzymes to assist digestion. Some dogs may simply not produce sufficient enzymes to efficiently breakdown their food.

Pet stores sell digestive enzymes for dogs. Some of the better brands also contain probiotics. Over enzyming your dog will produce diarrhea. But added in the right measure, enzymes can help your dog digest his food, and may even allow you to cut back the quantity a little bit because his system will be digesting more of the caloric value found in his meal.

PROBIOTICS can be helpful to dogs just as they are for humans. These are live microorganisms that assist in digestion. For centuries, humans have taken yogurt to aid digestion. That's because yogurt contains live probiotic cultures. A teaspoon to tablespoon of yogurt per meal can be helpful for dogs who suffer from unexplained bouts of periodic digestive upsets. Avoid yogurt with artificial sweeteners, but I find most dogs love the stuff and consider it a treat.

An alternative is Kefir which is a fermented beverage that tastes like a stronger version of yogurt. It contains dairy and grain, so like yogurt, we don't want to feed much. But a spoon a day may keep bad poop away. Kefir is loaded with various strains of beneficial bacteria.

If you overdose your dog with probiotics you will upset the delicate balance of nature in the digestive tract. Believe me, then you will know what bad poop looks like. So the trick is to use probiotics made for pets, following package directions, or use natural sources in sensibly small amounts from the grocery or health food store.

EATING POOP IS EITHER A BAD HABIT OR IS YOUR DOG'S WAY OF TELLING YOU SOMETHING IS WRONG. If your dog is eating poop, the first thing to do is to read the ingredient list on his dog food looking for those ingredients to be avoided. They are not easily digested by some dogs. Therefore they pass through the system at least partially undigested. Your dog is attempting to recycle the nutrition by consuming it again and having another go at providing himself with missing nutrients.

However if you are feeding a high quality food, you may simply try adding enzymes to the meal. Nutritional value may still be left in the feces if your dog isn't producing enough pancreatic enzymes to fully digest his food the first time around. You may have heard that some people add crushed pineapple to dog food to prevent this habit. You may even have heard that this is supposed to make the poop taste bad. Are you kidding? Shouldn't poop taste bad in the first place?

Pineapple is high in a protein digesting enzyme called bromelain. It can even be used to tenderize steaks. So in theory adding pineapple to dog food adds enzymes, but I think it simpler and safer to add the ones specifically formulated for dogs.

I have also heard about sprinkling meat tenderizer over dog food. Again, this is a shortcut way of adding enzymes. Just use enzymes from the pet store for safety and best results.

Once in a while, however, diet and poop eating are not related. It can just be a nasty habit. If you have done everything else, then by all means teach your dog a Leave It command and apply it to poop. I won't go into specifics on how to teach Leave It. Your local dog trainer will be happy to help. And you might need that help with a confirmed poop eater.

We have spent a great deal of time discussing bad poop and how to make it into good poop. Although it may be less of a mess, no poop at all is an equally disturbing problem.

CONSTIPATION is not a normal condition for dogs. It is the polar opposite of diarrhea on one hand. On the other hand, sometimes dogs will retain poop just because they're not allowing their bodies to eliminate. This can be caused by crating for too long, not finding the right surface, or from stress. A dog who eats but does not poop for too long will almost certainly explode with diarrhea. This is why, like Leyla in Turkey, I keep detailed daily records of all elimination. I don't want to miss the fact that a dog has failed to poop within 24 hours.

Constipation can have multiple causes. Check that the dog is being offered, and is consuming appropriate amounts of drinking water. It takes liberal quantities of water for the digestive system to process kibble. Lacking proper hydration, stool will be much harder and more difficult for the dog to move. It may also be painful to pass.

Constipation that lasts too long can indicate a serious condition such as intestinal blockage or impaction. If I cannot arrange to get poop within 48 hours, and I usually can, I'm off to the vet, sooner if I see other symptoms.

DIARRHEA DIET CAN TAKE A DOG FROM SQUIRTING TO BOUND UP in short order. This is the only case in which I am not concerned if a dog who is eating should fail to poop within 24 hours. However, I do expect even that dog to poop within 48 hours.

POOP RETAINING is a common cause for failure to poop. Certainly it appears the same as constipation, but the cause can be either psychological or physical. One physical reason dogs may retain poop is pain caused by trying to pass poop when the dog has not had enough water to form stool appropriately. Another common physical reason dogs may retain stool can be caused by a grooming problem.

Check your dog's anus to see if fecal material and fur have become matted. I have often found retaining dogs to suffer from an effectively sealed anus. This is more common in small, hairy dogs. Trying to pass poop in this condition causes intense pain. Suffering from this problem only a time or two can cause a dog to become fearful of defecation. Thus they do their almighty best to retain. In the event of matting, use a warm compress to soften feces, and then scissors or clip the area bare. You might need an assistant. Be patient and gentle so you don't further irritate the area. The dog will not be comfortable with this process but he will soon be very much alleviated.

A similar desire to retain poop and avoid pain can come from inflamed or impacted anal glands. These glands are located on either side of your dog's rectum. This might be the last place on earth you want to poke around in. But if you'll just put on latex gloves and gently touch the outside area, you might feel a couple of small lumps at 8 and 4 o'clock. If you can detect them, they're probably causing a problem. A vet or a groomer can help by emptying them.

This is not a job for the squeamish or the uninitiated so don't try this at home. Anal glands can even impact and rupture which definitely means a trip to the vet. Some dogs will happily pass on at a ripe old age and you'd never even know they had anal glands because each time they pooped, the glands expressed themselves a little bit. Although diet can help, other dogs will need regular help emptying those glands.

Another common reason for poop retaining is purely psychological. Some owners inadvertently traumatize their dogs in the act of defecation. They see the dog pooping in the house and they run up screaming at the dog. Some such dogs do not draw the conclusion the owner wishes to impart: that you're doing it in the wrong place.

Traumatized dogs have drawn the conclusion not that they're pooping in the wrong place, *but that they're pooping*.

Let me give you an interesting case study. A woman called with a severe housebreaking problem. She walked her dog frequently and for hours at a time, but he would never poop on leash or even loose in her yard under observation. He also retained both poop and pee. This dog would urinate as little as every 18 hours, and poop only every 36 hours. On those rare occasions when he would eliminate, he would only do it when loose in the house, sneaking away from the owner to do it.

The story as relayed over the phone gave me critical information. I knew with certainty that the owner had traumatized the dog in some way. Now the job was to find out how, put a stop to it, and to reverse the problem.

The client came to see me and we went for a walk. I saw that her dog was a maniac on the leash, pulling, straining, sniffing constantly and reactive to everything he saw. He was so agitated that he didn't even realize he had to pee. So I spent 20 minutes teaching him leash etiquette, kept his nose off the ground, and then finally pointed him to a tree. My client was surprised when he calmly hiked his leg and peed.

Poop was another matter altogether. The dog had not pooped for 24 hours and the client assured me that he wouldn't go for another 12, and even then it would be somewhere in the house. I had another idea, and as I told her about it, she shook her head, assuring me that it wouldn't work. I resisted a strong temptation to bet her.

THE MATCH TRICK. I use an old dog handler technique to cause retaining dogs to poop. It's commonly called the Match Trick.

Simply lubricate a paper match and gently insert. You can insert either end, but here are a few tips:

- * use a lubricated paper match, not a wood one
- * never use a long fireplace match, not even on a Dachshund
- * insert it gently
- * leave a quarter inch of the match hanging out
- * get the dog out on a leash immediately, and keep him moving until he poops
- * normally you have only 30 seconds to three minutes before the dog will poop
- * if you prefer, you can use an infant sized glycerine suppository sold at pharmacies
- * if you use an infant sized suppository, no lubrication is needed, use a latex glove, and insert completely
- * never use any other object for this purpose

I inserted the match, hustled the dog outside and handed the client the leash with the request to keep him moving. The client was adamant that the dog would not poop, but I

knew better. Mind you, if that dog had had butt cheeks he would have been clenching them. I could tell that he was trying heroically to not defecate.

The anus is a ring of muscle. Introduction of a small (but safe) foreign object into this muscle causes it to contract and release in the attempt to reject the object. These contractions spread upward to the sphincter which also begins to contract. Poop and foreign object are then expelled together.

With a terrified look in his eye, my client's dog finally hunched over to poop. The client made a sudden movement which surprised me, but not the dog. She was lunging at his rear end, crinkling a large plastic grocery bag.

"Freeze!" I requested, and she did. When I asked what she was doing, the client explained that she didn't like to feel poop through the bag. So she would commonly try to lay the bag out so the poop would fall onto it. She would then neatly tie up the corners of the bag. Or at least this was her intention.

As a practical matter she had over-emphasized her interest in the dog's bowel movements, completely traumatizing him. At my insistence, she remained still while her dog finished his business, but he wouldn't take his eyes off her the entire time, the whites of his eyes showing his state of near panic.

My advice was to use the match trick for several days and to ignore the dog in the act of pooping. Only when he finished was my client to take out a bag and pick it up. A few days later she reported back that all was normalized and he now trusted her enough to poop on the walks.

Without being accusatory, see if you can identify ways in which dogs have been traumatized in relation to pooping. Then you can use the information here to calmly undo the problem.

The long and the short of it is that dogs who retain poop, regardless of the reason, will inevitably have either bad poop, will make it in the wrong place or both. So if you want to keep your dog healthy and happily pooping nice ones, stay on top of his poop like white on rice.

KEEP THE DOG MOVING TO GET THAT POOP. Dogs rarely poop when they have not had exercise. The act of moving about stimulates the bowels and sphincter. The only time a normal dog will poop immediately upon being taken outside is when that dog is nearly bursting and you have waited too long.

I do allow dogs to sniff a bit when I think they have to poop. But if he dawdles too long in any one place, he's more likely to be distracted by an interesting scent than to be picking out a place. If you are pressed for time, take the dog out on a six foot leash and move him around in large, looping circles with you at the center. This way he'll be

trotting while you'll only be walking about a bit. This will give him the necessary stimulation to do the job.

The best practice for getting good and regular poop (as well as pee) is to walk your dog regularly, at least twice per day for at least 15 minutes each. Life happens outside the home. Go experience it with your dog. He'll be happy to do it for you, if you'll only do it for him.

Well folks, that is everything I know about poop, or nearly everything. It's the topic that obsesses dog professionals every day, and in times of distress, dog owners too. If you're unsure of what to do, call the vet. But just like in humans, a little upset in the digestive tract need not ruin your day, let alone your carpet.



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