

"Why does my older dog pee on the floor?"

Question: *I have an eight-year-old female cocker spaniel who is a wonderful dog, except that she has trouble controlling her bladder. When we leave, she pees on the floor, as if to punish us for leaving her. She is housebroken and even comes to us to let us know that she needs to go out when we are home. However, she still pees on the floor when we are gone. Do you have any advice?*

Answer: *First, take your dog to your veterinarian for a thorough physical exam, including blood and urine testing to make sure that she does not have a kidney or bladder problem. Your veterinarian may even want to do an ultrasound of your dog's bladder to rule out a tumor.*

If the tests do not reveal any problems, then I would be concerned that she may be developing incontinence. Incontinence in older female dogs is not an unexpected problem and medication may help prevent her from "leaking." If she is suffering from incontinence, being left alone may cause her stress and make the problem worse.

If incontinence is ruled out and all laboratory tests are within normal range, then I would suspect that she is suffering from mild separation anxiety and medication may help. Ask your veterinarian about appropriate medication to treat anxiety and a recommendation for a veterinary behaviorist. Medication and behavior modification together may help resolve the problem.

This question was answered by Dr. Peg Rucker, hospital director of Southwest Virginia Veterinary Services in Lebanon, Virginia.