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## CANINE URINARY INCONTINENCE

*Dr. Rebecca Donaldson*

Urinary incontinence is a condition in dogs that causes the involuntary leakage of urine. If you've ever noticed your dog leaving behind a wet spot of urine on his or her bed after they get up from sleeping or unconsciously dribbling urine while walking, your dog is likely experiencing urinary incontinence.

Urinary incontinence is most commonly seen in older spayed female dogs, but can also be seen in young dogs with congenital defects, dogs with spinal injuries, and dogs with bladder infections. An ectopic ureter is an example of an uncommon congenital defect that may cause urine dribbling or leaking in dogs often younger than one year of age. It occurs when the ureter, the tube that brings urine into the bladder from the kidney, attaches somewhere other than the bladder.

A far more common cause of urinary incontinence is called urethral sphincter mechanism incompetence. This is the type of incontinence that is seen in older spayed female dogs. The exact mechanism is unknown, but it has been suggested that low levels of estrogen after a spay may be a contributing factor.

To determine the cause of your dog's urinary issues, your veterinarian will begin by asking you questions regarding your dog's history and urination habits. It is important to differentiate urinary incontinence from other frequent issues such as excessive urination and drinking, urinating small amounts more frequently, and behavioral abnormalities leading to accidents in the house. A thorough physical examination will be performed, including palpation of your dog's bladder. Your veterinarian will likely begin with a urinalysis, a diagnostic test which may help diagnose a bladder infection. It may then be recommended to perform additional testing such as blood work, x-rays, ultrasound, or a urine culture. Treatment for your dog's urinary incontinence will depend on the suspected cause of the problem.

If your dog is experiencing urinary incontinence, please schedule an appointment today so that our skilled veterinarians can get to the bottom of it!

