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## Pet Urine and Carpet

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Owners of even the best-trained pets will occasionally encounter pet urine accidents. Often, the urine is not discovered until long after the accident. The types of damage from pet urine can be diverse and are dependent upon the makeup of the urine. Urine content will change over the pet's life because of the pet's diet, medications, age, health, sex, and reproductive cycles. Because of these variations, some urine stains may not be removable.

To treat urine-damaged areas, blot damp areas as soon as the urine is detected, with plain white paper toweling. Apply a solution of 1/4 teaspoon of a liquid dishwashing detergent (non-bleach and non-lanolin) with one cup of lukewarm water. Do not use automatic dishwashing detergent or laundry detergent. Absorb the moisture with paper towel, rinse with warm water and repeat the application of detergent. Continue rinsing and blotting with the detergent solution and water as long as there is a transfer to the toweling or improvement in the spot. Follow the detergent application with a solution of two tablespoons of ammonia with one cup of water. Rinse with warm water and repeat. Blot dry. Blot the area with a solution of one cup white vinegar to two cups water, and blot dry. Apply a half-inch layer of paper towels to the affected area, and weigh down with a flat, heavy, non-fading object. Continue to change paper towels until completely dry.

Urine can affect the dyes used in carpet, although not all occurrences will result in a permanent stain. Success is dependent upon the content of the urine, the dyes and finish used, and the time elapsed after the deposit. Some urine spots may be immediately noticeable, while others may take weeks or months for a reaction. The dyes may change color immediately after contact with urine. Color can sometimes be restored by treating the area with a solution of two tablespoons of a clear, non-sudsy ammonia in one cup of water. While this treatment is not always successful in restoring color, the ammonia can be effective in removing urine content and reducing objectionable odors.

When urine spots develop slowly and are noticed after much time has elapsed, the dyes and carpet fibers may be permanently damaged. In beige carpet, blue dyes are attacked by pet urine, leaving behind the red and yellow dyes with a resulting stain appearing red, yellow, or orange.

Pet urine, left unattended, can damage carpet in several ways. Moisture can weaken the layers of the carpet, allowing separation or delamination of the backing material. Seam areas can be particularly damaged and can separate.

Another problem, especially with cats, is odor. Unless the cat urine can be completely removed, complete odor removal is unlikely. A number of products are available to combat odor, but may simply mask the odor, and, in times of high humidity, the odor may reappear. Recently, enzymes, available at pet stores and veterinary offices, have been developed that are more effective; but they may be better used by a carpet cleaning professional. If odor cannot be removed, the damaged area of the carpet can be replaced with a piece from reserved scrap. If carpet replacement is necessary, then replacement of cushion and even subflooring may also be necessary.

Some carpet manufacturers have developed backings that resist spills and even prevent the spillage from penetrating the carpet into the carpet cushion and, perhaps, the subfloor. Check with your carpet dealer about these products.