POWER POOCHES

HELP, MY DOG SNIFFS AND PEES ON POOP!



Understanding the Why Behind the Behavior

It might look strange to us, but this natural behavior serves many important purposes for our dogs.

WHY DOGS MARK ON OTHER ANIMAL SPOTS

Species Communication:
Dogs investigate the waste of other animals to collect social and environmental information. Marking over it allows them to tell other animals—such as neighborhood cats, rabbits, or foxes—that they are present in the area.

Gathering "Pee-Mail":
Feces and urine contain pheromones that communicate a wealth of data, including the other animal's health, sex, reproductive status, and even their current mood.

Territorial Branding:
By urinating on spots frequented by other animals, they are effectively "signing a guestbook" or labeling the territory as theirs too.



WHY LEASH REACTIVE DOGS MARK ON DOG POOP

Controlled Communication:
Reactive dogs often feel stressed by direct, face-to-face visual encounters with other dogs. Leaving their scent on top of another dog's waste allows them to communicate their presence, confidence, and identity from a safe, comfortable distance without physical conflict.

Scent Interception:
Scent marking allows them to "overwrite" information. By peeing on top of another dog's waste, they ensure that the next dog visiting that specific spot reads their information first.

Anxiety and Control:
Leash reactivity stems from frustration, fear, or a desire for control. Depositing their scent over another dog's high-value marker (poop) can help them claim territory, which can temporarily soothe their anxiety and increase their confidence.

Confidence Building:
For a reactive dog who has already improved significantly, this behavior can be a sign of growing confidence. They are actively choosing to engage with their environment on their own terms.

WHY IT HAPPENS ON EVERY WALK

Predictable Stress Relief:
Walks put reactive dogs on high alert. Marking on every walk provides them with a familiar, comforting routine that helps them process environmental stress.

Securing their Route:
Walking the same paths daily triggers an instinct to constantly renew their "boundary markers" over any new scents left by neighborhood dogs.

Adrenaline Dumping:
Scent marking triggers a release of feel-good hormones, which helps them lower their arousal levels after a tense moment on the leash.



BENEFITS OF ALLOWING THIS BEHAVIOR

Mental Enrichment:
Sniffing and marking are as vital as physical exercise. When they sniff and mark, their brain works at a fast pace to analyze scents, providing significant mental stimulation.

Stress Regulation:
Engaging in scent work and free sniffing can lower a dog's heart rate and promote calm behavior. The act of sniffing is naturally soothing and can help a reactive dog divert attention away from stressful triggers.

Safe Communication:
Marking allows them to establish their presence, identity, and status safely from a distance. This is especially helpful for dogs who prefer to avoid close physical contact with others.

Increased Confidence:
Successfully completing scent-based tasks can boost a dog's self-esteem and make them more resilient in challenging situations.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

While letting them mark is generally fine, there are a few health and social factors to keep in mind:

Hygiene Risks:
Contact with other dogs' waste carries a risk of exposure to parasites (like roundworms or hookworms) and bacteria such as E. coli or Salmonella. It is best to let her sniff briefly rather than linger excessively on the actual waste.

Contagious Diseases:
Viruses like Canine Parvovirus can be shed in infected feces and remain contagious in the environment for a long time. Ensure she is up-to-date on her vaccinations to stay protected.

Courtesy:
If they tend to mark on private property, like a neighbor's lawn, it can be considerate to redirect them to more neutral spots, as repeated urination can damage grass or plants.

Marking is natural, enriching, and often a healthy way for dogs to navigate their world.
Understanding the why helps us support them with empathy and balance.

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