

# *Urine burns on the Lawn*

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A common summer time problem for dog owners and the neighbors of dog owners is brown spots on the lawn. These brown spots are urine burns and they most commonly occur because of the nitrogen found in the dogs' urine and feces. Nitrogen is a byproduct of protein breakdown through normal metabolic processes and is filtered by the kidneys. In small amounts nitrogen can make your grass look greener because nitrogen is a main component in fertilizers. The problem arises when larger more concentrated amounts of nitrogen are deposited in a single area. Urine burns can be seen more frequently on lawns that also have commercial fertilizers applied to them. Nitrogen is found in your dogs' feces but because the stool is solid the nitrogen is released more slowly.



There are a few ways to prevent urine burns. The easiest is to create an area where your dog will always go to urinate and defecate. This area can have pea gravel or a grass that is more resistant to urine burns, such as Ryegrass or fescue.

Other ways to reduce urine burns are to dilute the nitrogen concentration within the urine. One possibility is to encourage your dog to drink more water creating less concentrated urine when they do void on the lawn. A different method is to simply add extra water to the elimination areas so that the nitrogen in the urine seeps past the grass' roots deeper into the soil. Urine burns are really only a concern when rainfall is decreased; most commonly in the hot summer months when lawn growth is at a minimum. To ensure that your dogs' feces do not cause a nitrogen burn the easiest thing to do is to clean up after your dog defecates.

There are products available over the counter that are marketed to help with urine burns that can either be applied to the grass or that you can feed to your dog. These products are not very effective and give varied results. We do not recommend giving supplements that alter the dogs' urine composition due to other potential health effects.

For more information feel free to contact Cedar Grove Veterinary Services at 920-668-6212.

