

# Swiss Run Greater Swiss Mountain Dogs

## Urinary Incontinence

When a dog develops urinary incontinence, it's important to differentiate between incontinence, from behavioral urination, the lack of house training, or a medical issue. Watch your pet closely to be sure that you are seeing incontinence not intentional urination. It is advised that owners bring in a urine sample to rule out behavioral and medical causes.

The most common causes for incontinence are:

- Infection in the urinary tract
- Excessive drinking
- Weak bladder sphincter (common in females)
- Spinal cord disease/injury

Bladder infection is the most common cause of incontinence in young adult female dogs. This condition can be diagnosed by a urine culture and can be treated with antibiotics. A second urine culture will be done after your animal has finished the antibiotics to confirm that the infection has been cleared up.

Excessive drinking is when your animal drinks so much water that their bladder simply overfills. A urinalysis will show a dilute urine concentration. Blood tests can be run to make sure that the kidneys are functioning properly; in some cases excessive water intake can be due to kidney disease or diabetes, so blood work can rule those out.

A weak bladder sphincter is common in female dogs that are obese, geriatric or that have a reduced sensitivity in the control of the muscle (sphincter). A weak sphincter may be treated symptomatically with hormones replacement, phenylpropanolamine that helps tighten the sphincter.

I recommend spaying your girl around a year of age. It is also preferred to wait until she has had her first heat cycle. GSMD that are spayed at an early age seem to have a great tendency towards urinary incontinence. I realize going through a heat cycle can be an inconvenience, but GSMD that have gone through a heat cycle seem to be much less prone to incontinence. Many vets will try to convince you that it is in your puppy's best interest to spay earlier. It is true that a dog that has gone through a heat cycle has a slightly increased risk of mammary tumors. It is also true that a GSMD spayed at a young age may be as much as 40% more likely to develop incontinence. It is up to you to weigh the risk. It is not your vet living with a 100 lb dog that is leaking urine. You need to stand your ground on this issue.

Males are not affected as much with incontinence issues, but you may want to wait until a year of age or older as well before neutering. Males that are neutered early tend towards excessive long bone growth and tend to look more like girls. Swissys are very slow maturing and waiting until a year or older may not have any ill effects.

Before any course of action is taken you are advised to discuss any and all treatment plans for your pet with your veterinarian.