



# Bladder Expression Quick-Reference

The steps to keep to hand, once your vet has shown you

PETSLIKEMINE  
INTERVERTEBRAL DISC DISEASE

PET NAME	DATE	TIMES PER DAY (PER VET)	VET / NURSE
_____	_____	_____	_____

## GET SHOWN IN PERSON FIRST

*Before you rely on this card, have your vet or a nurse show you on your own dog. This sheet and the demonstration video reinforce that teaching, they do not replace it. It matters all the more because even trained professionals do not always empty the bladder completely, so having your technique checked is genuinely important.*

## WHY IT MATTERS

A bladder left to over-fill can lose its muscle tone, which may delay or reduce your dog's return of normal control, and a bladder that does not empty breeds infection that can travel up toward the kidneys. Expressing regularly keeps it from over-filling and helps keep infection at bay while your dog recovers.

## HOW OFTEN

Most dogs that cannot wee on their own need expressing around three to four times a day, spread through the day and last thing at night. Work to a routine rather than waiting for signs, but do learn them: a firm, rounded swelling low in the belly, and sometimes a dribble of urine as an over-full bladder overflows.

## THE TECHNIQUE, STEP BY STEP

- 1 Position your dog.** Standing and supported with a sling or a towel under the belly, or lying on its side if it cannot stand. Calm and relaxed, for you both, makes it far easier.
- 2 Find the bladder.** It feels like a smooth, round, water-filled balloon low in the tummy toward the back, firmer and easier to find when full. In a male it sits roughly above the middle of the penis.
- 3 Apply gentle, steady, even pressure.** Cup it with one or both hands and press slowly and evenly toward the back end, gradually increasing until urine flows in a steady stream. A short delay before it flows is completely normal.
- 4 Empty it as fully as you can.** Hold the steady pressure until the stream slows to dribbles and the bladder feels small and soft, pause, then gently press again. The whole thing usually takes ten to twenty seconds once you have the knack.

*Written and reviewed by Dr Alastair Greenway MRCVS and Claire Greenway BVM&S MRCVS. This sheet explains and records. It does not diagnose or prescribe. Always follow your own vet's instructions.*

**How to use.** Take it gently and calmly throughout. This genuinely gets easier with practice, and for many dogs the need for it is temporary as they recover.

**BRING THIS WITH YOU TO YOUR NEXT VET  
APPOINTMENT**



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The rules that keep it safe, and when to call your vet

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## THE TWO RULES THAT NEVER BEND

- The pressure is slow, steady, and even, never a pulsing, jarring, or punching action, which is both useless and could cause harm.
- It should never hurt your dog or need real force. It is gentle, patient pressure, not squeezing or crushing.

## IF THE TUMMY IS TENSE

A warm compress on the belly or a calm massage first can relax the muscles, and if your dog is on a prescribed muscle relaxant, expressing twenty to thirty minutes after a dose can make it easier.

## AN HONEST WORD: IT IS OFTEN NOT COMPLETE

*Even trained vets and nurses remove only about half the urine on average, and at-home expression is likely less effective still. So do not assume the bladder is empty just because you have expressed it, a meaningful amount often remains, which is exactly why your vet stays involved and may check how well it is emptying.*

## IF IT WILL NOT EMPTY, DO NOT FORCE IT

*A firm, tense bladder that will not empty with gentle, steady pressure is a reason to contact your vet, not to push harder. Forcing urine out against a closed outlet is not safe. Your vet has other options, including medication and intermittent catheterisation.*

## PROTECT THE SKIN

Urine left on the skin causes painful scald. After each expression, and whenever your dog leaks, clean the area with warm water, pat it properly dry, and check for redness.

## STOP AND CALL YOUR VET IF

- You cannot express the bladder at all, or it feels hard and will not empty
- There is blood in the urine
- Your dog strains, or seems to be in pain or distress
- There are signs of infection: a strong or unpleasant smell, cloudy urine, or your dog seeming unwell or feverish
- Your dog is passing no urine at all

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**How to use.** If something does not seem right, it is always worth a call. You are doing something kind and protective for your dog.

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APPOINTMENT**