

SUBMISSIVE URINATION

Submissive urination is not a housebreaking problem. It is caused by a dog feeling threatened, such as when he's being scolded, or when he's approached by someone he thinks is threatening. The dog's response results from the dog's perception of a threat, not from the actual intention of the person. The problem usually goes away as the dog becomes more confident and comfortable in the new home. Obedience training is an excellent way to build the dog's confidence. Introducing the dog to new people, situations and experiences also should help build confidence.

How can you tell if the problem is submissive urination or a lack of housetraining?

Submission urination is occurring

IF the dog urinates when he's being scolded
or greeted or approached,
OR if the dog is shy or timid,
OR if he's had a history of rough or abusive treatment,
AND the urination is accompanied by submissive behavior,
such as crouching or rolling over and exposing the belly.

If submission urination seems to be the problem, first take your dog to the vet to rule out medical reasons (eg., urinary infection, bladder stones) for the problem. When greeting your dog, make the greeting relaxed and low key. Give the dog reasons to behave non-submissively; teach him a few commands (obedience training!), have him SIT and STAY, or SHAKE as you approach him, then reward him for obeying. Avoid approaching him with body language that dogs interpret as dominant behavior; for example:

Don't punish or scold; this will make the problem worse;
Pet him on the chin rather than on top of the head;
Approach him from the side, rather than from his front,
and show him the side of your body as you
approach, rather than your front;
Avoid direct eye contact - look over his head instead;
Get down to his level by bending at the knees when you
greet him, rather than towering over him and
bending at the waist, and encourage others to
greet him in the same way.

ANXIETY WETTING (also called Excitement Urination) ↑

This problem also is not a housebreaking problem. It occurs most often during greeting, play time, and other occasions when the dog is excited. It's also very common in dogs less than a year old. Unlike submissive urination, the dog will not assume submissive gestures or postures, such as crouching or rolling over to expose the belly. This problem usually goes away on its own as the dog grows older, provided it's not made worse by punishment or accidental reinforcement. (An example of accidental reinforcement might be playing with the dog and keeping him excited when he wets.)

To deal with anxiety or excitement wetting, don't punish or scold the dog when this type of urination occurs, and keep your greetings relaxed and low key. When the dog is excited, ignore him until he's calm. Play outdoors until the problem goes away.

