

Submissive and Excitement Urination in Dogs

By Sherry Woodard

Dogs sometimes resort to submissive urination when they don't want to challenge someone that they perceive as dominant. Other dogs are prone to urinating when they become excited. The submissive urinators are often timid or young dogs who lack confidence in themselves. Submissive urination can be their response to intimidating encounters with either people or with other dogs.



Submissive urination is fairly standard puppy behavior in relation to a dominant adult dog, so it's not anything abnormal. If you have an adult dog, however, who suddenly starts having submissive or excitement urination, you should first see your veterinarian because there could be a medical cause.

To minimize the possibility of submissive urination, you should avoid using postures or gestures that the dog might view as threatening, such as:

- Making direct eye contact with the dog
- Bending over the dog
- Reaching toward the dog with both hands, especially over the dog's head
- Hugging the dog
- Approaching the dog head-on

Punishment of any kind, even harsh tones, may cause submissive urination.

A less-threatening greeting for a submissive dog would be as follows:

- When approaching the dog, look off to the side rather than directly at her
- Bend down on your haunches or sit, so that you appear smaller to the dog
- Wait quietly, without moving, for the dog to approach you and smell you
- After the dog approaches, reach slowly with one hand to pet her under the chin

If the dog doesn't approach, offer a small treat. Much of the advice above also applies to dogs who urinate out of excitement. Keep greetings low-key and tell visitors to ignore the dog. Try to encourage quiet, non-threatening forms of play, and reward the dog when playtime doesn't end in urination.

If an accident does happen, clean it up with an enzymatic cleaner (such as Nature's Miracle or Simple Solution), which neutralizes the odor. To encourage the dog to urinate in a more appropriate place, take the urine-soaked paper towels to the desired spot outside. Don't ever punish a dog for urinating in the house.

Management of submissive or excitement urination requires patience and time. If the inappropriate urination continues, seek help from a trainer or behaviorist. Inappropriate urination can also be a result of fear, separation anxiety, incomplete house-training, or an unneutered male dog's natural tendency to mark his territory.

Sherry Woodard is the dog training and care consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.

See also: The Look of Fear
Separation Anxiety
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