

Submissive Urination: What You Can Do About It

What is submissive urination?

Submissive urination occurs when a dog urinates at (what he perceives to be) an exciting moment.

- You could be telling the dog to “sit”
- You could be greeting the dog at the door
- You could be giving the dog some type of direction

Why does submissive urination occur?

- Because a dog perceives that he is in the presence of a “dominant” or intimidating person or animal, or someone he doesn’t know. To the dog, this is an unfamiliar situation.
- Feeling threatened by someone or something could also result in submissive urination, but a dog does not necessarily need to be threatened for the problem to occur.
- Because he is a shy, anxious, or timid dog.
- Because he has a history of rough treatment or being punished after the fact.

What can be done about submissive urination?

- Take your dog to a veterinary clinic to rule out any medical reasons for the behavior. The doctor may suggest certain medication to help with the problem
- Build your dog’s confidence by teaching him commands and rewarding him for obeying. For this to be successful, everyone in the household must be consistent about teaching and reinforcing the house rules.
- Build your dog’s confidence by sticking to a regular schedule for feeding, exercising, and playing times. Dogs are more secure when they know what to expect.
- Choose an alternative to getting angry; do not punish or scold the dog. Consider crate training, which helps prevent many problem behaviors.
- Catch him doing the right thing and reward him with treats or attention, rather than only noticing when he is doing the wrong thing, to build his confidence.
- Approach the dog with “non-dominant” or less intimidating postures, such as getting down on his level, petting him under the chin, and approaching him from the side.
- Gradually expose him to new people and situations, and try to make sure all of his new experiences are positive and happy – use tiny pieces of treats or toys to reinforce the idea that unfamiliar people and things are good.
- If the dog is urinating out of excitement, keep greetings low-key, and ignore him until he is calm.