



Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA

# Submissive & Excitement Urination

It's normal for dogs to urinate when they become excited or when they want to demonstrate submission. Even a dog who is otherwise housetrained may leave dribbles and puddles of urine at your feet and on the floor when greeting you.

## Submissive urination

This is the ultimate show of respect and deference for higher rank. Dogs who urinate submissively are insecure and usually haven't been shown that there are more acceptable ways to show respect, such as paw-raising (shake hands) or hand-licking (give a kiss). Some dogs submissively urinate because they feel the need to apologize. This is often caused by excessive or delayed punishment, which frightens and confuses the dog without teaching him how to make amends. The dog resorts to the only way he knows to show respect and fear... by urinating.

When the dog urinates for these reasons, it is best to ignore him. If you try to reassure, he'll think you are praising him for urinating, and will urinate more. If you scold, he'll feel an even greater need to apologize by urinating.

Treatment is aimed at building the dog's confidence and showing him other ways to demonstrate respect. To accomplish this, teach the dog a few basic obedience exercises. A dog who can earn praise by obeying "Come", "sit", or "shake hands" will soon develop self-esteem and confidence. A confident dog who can say "Hello, Boss" by sitting and shaking hands does not feel the need to urinate at his human's feet.

## Excitement urination

This type of urination usually occurs in puppies and is caused by lack of bladder control. The dog is not aware that she is urinating, and any punishment will only confuse her. Since she does not know why you are angry, the excitement urination will quickly become submissive urination in an attempt to appease you. As the pup matures and develops bladder control, the problem usually disappears. In the meantime, it is a good idea to do something to help keep the pup (and your floor) dry.

The best treatment is to prevent the dog from becoming overexcited in the first place. You can do this by exposing her to the stimulus that excites her, over and over, until she no longer finds it exciting. Most commonly, dogs become excited when their human returns home or when people come to visit. If this happens to you, when you return home, simply ignore the dog for about 10 minutes. Don't even look at her. Pretend she's invisible. Then, leave again for a few minutes, return and ignore, leave, return, and ignore. Repeat until the dog is not only unexcited, but is bored with the whole thing. Have visitors go through the same routine if the dog becomes overexcited by company. When the dog has calmed down, then very quietly and gently say hello. If any signs of excitement appear, quickly exit and repeat the coming-and-going routine. Or, give the dog something else to do and think about. A rapid sequence of heeling and sitting will capture the dog's attention and channel her excitement to the heel-sit game.

**For more info, call our free Behavior Helpline (650/340-7022 x783 or, for Spanish, x786) or consider a low-cost consultation. To make a consultation appointment, call 650/340-7022 x667. The PHS/SPCA Behavior Department, like many shelter programs, is funded by donations.**