

## DOG TRAINING

# Why Dogs Pee When Excited or Scared?

### Submissive and Excitement Urination

Submissive urination plagues about one in ten dog owners (the dogs don't know it's a problem) and is essentially a personality trait. This is not a housetraining problem and should not be treated like one.

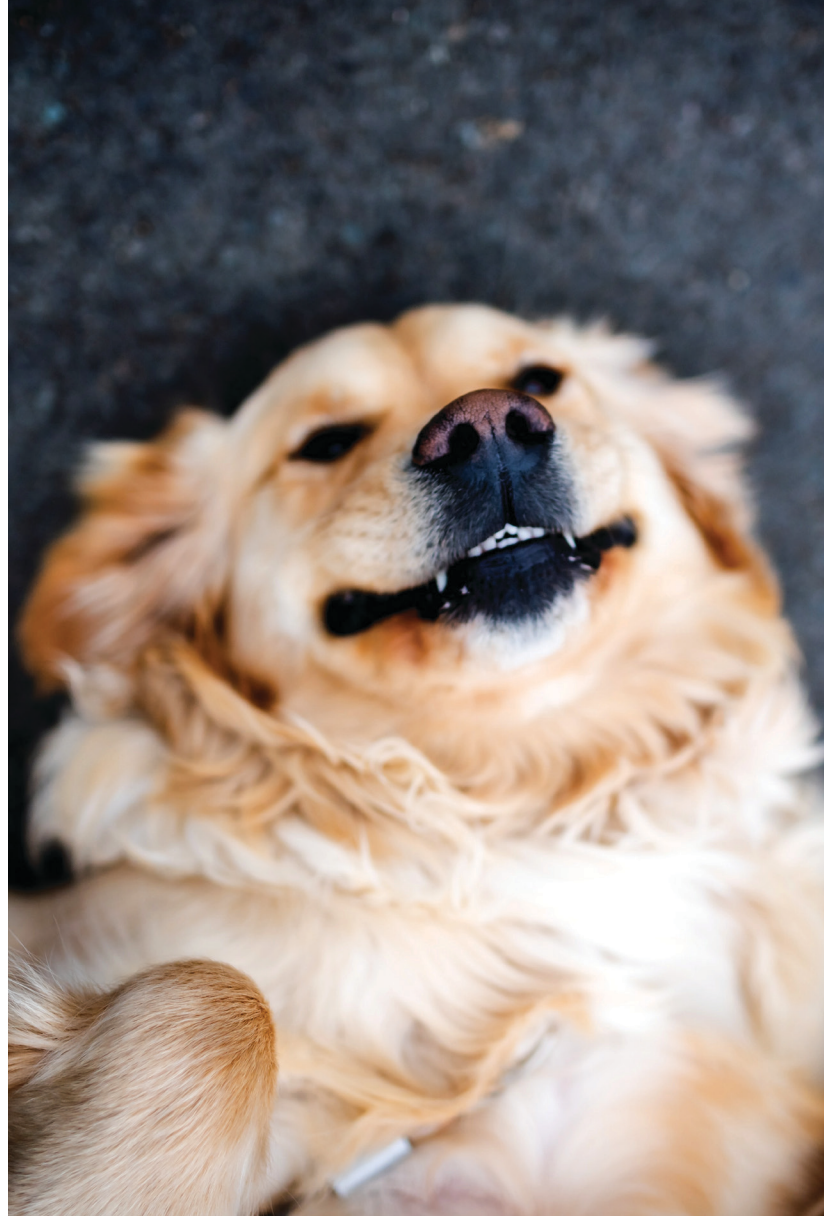
The many differences between canine and human social behavior and communication can lead to miscommunication, misunderstandings and what humans consider "behavior problems." From a dog's perspective, for example, submissive urination is perfectly normal; but owners have real concerns about this behavior.

Submissive urination is the ultimate gesture of submission. Submissive urinators communicate that they are absolutely no threat to other dogs. In response to the submissive signals, dominant dogs stop their display.

Common situations where dogs get excited or fearful, and urinate are:

- over affectionate greetings
- when you arrive home
- guests entering your home
- arguments between people
- scolding
- loud noises

While submissively urinating, dogs usually show other submissive signs, including laying their ears back, tucking their tails, cowering, and avoiding eye contact. They may also give a submissive "grin" in which the corners of the lips are pulled back, exposing molars and premolars. This should not be confused with an aggressive lip lift, which shows the incisors and canines. Some dogs roll onto their sides, exposing their bellies, while giving these signals and urinating. This is not a request for a belly rub; it is a request to be left alone.



## What to Do If Your Dog Has A Submissive Urination Problem:

- Take your dog to the vet to rule out medical reasons for the behavior.
- Keep greetings low-key. When you first get home, quietly walk in the door and go about your business. Let your dog outside to pee as usual, but without any fanfare. If you talk to him at all, just say “Hi Rover” in a calm, casual tone of voice. Don’t make eye contact with him or pet him. After he settles down, very gently crouch down to his level presenting to him sideways (this makes you very non-threatening), then calmly and quietly praise him and tell him he’s good. Be sure to tell your family and visitors to do the same.
- Dogs, especially shy or submissive ones, are very sensitive to body language and tone of voice. When speaking to your dog, use a calm, confident, moderate tone of voice. Avoid very high or low extremes in pitch. Don’t “coo-coo” or baby talk to your dog either. These tones can create excitement that results in submissive urination.
- Bending over a dog is a “dominant” posture that may provoke an accident. Get down on his level by bending at the knees rather than leaning over from the waist and ask others to approach him in the same way.
- Pet him under the chin rather than on top of the head.
- Approach him from the side, rather than from the front, and/or present the side of your body to him, rather than your full front.
- These dogs are often intimidated by direct eye contact as well. Look at your dog’s face without looking directly into his eyes, and only for very short periods. Avoid direct eye contact -- look at his back or tail instead.
- Incorporate basic obedience (Sit, Down, Come, etc.) into your daily life and when your dog obeys, he gains confidence through your praise. Just don’t overdo the praise (this can result in a puddle!). A simple “Good boy” and gentle pat is enough.

***...Always encourage and PRAISE the dog for what is done right. This helps to build self-confidence and cements the bond between you and your pet.***



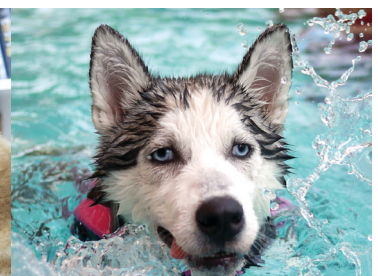
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- Encourage and reward confident postures from him. Do everything you can to boost your dog's confidence. Always encourage and PRAISE the dog for what it does right. This helps to build self-confidence and cements the bond between you and your pet.

## **Excitement Urination**

Excitement urination, a variation of the submissive form, usually occurs during greetings. Dogs with this behavior often do not show other signs of submission. Instead, they seem happy and excited to be greeted by humans. These are the puppies that urinate when greeted and then wag their tails and jump on humans, splashing urine all over. Excitement urination occurs most often during greetings and playtime and is not accompanied by submissive posturing.

During excitement, young dogs often spontaneously urinate. They have no control over this and sometimes do not even realize it has occurred. Other dogs may urinate as a sign of submission in the presence of another animal (or person) that they consider dominant. These types of urination problems seem to be caused by either a lack of neuromuscular control over the bladder or by previous treatment that frightened or intimidated the puppy.

You should try to determine what actions or events cause the involuntary urination to occur. For some, this will be easy. Excitement or sudden movement toward the puppy may cause her to urinate. For others, it might be something as simple as direct eye contact. Many puppies urinate when you bend over them, so instead, kneel to their level. Whatever the cause, do your best to eliminate these situations or actions. Most puppies will outgrow this behavior by six months to a year of age, especially if we let them mature through this stage of their life in a gentle and calm environment. Be patient. When an accident occurs, do not make a fuss. Clean it up and forget it.

Your Dog May Have an Excitement Urination Problem If:

- Urination occurs when your dog is excited; for example, during greetings or during playtime.
- Urination occurs when your dog is less than one year old.

What to Do If Your Dog Has an Excitement Urination Problem:

- Take your dog to the veterinarian to rule out medical reasons for the behavior.
- Keep greetings low-key.
- Don't punish or scold him.
- If you are expecting guests, take your dog for a walk and get his bladder emptied ahead of time, and restrict water consumption for an hour before your guests are to arrive.
- To avoid accidents, play outdoors until the problem is resolved.
- Take the excitement and stress out of the periods that previously triggered submissive urination. You should also gradually expose him to new people and new situations and try to make sure all his new experiences are positive and happy. Socialization at training classes, dog daycare, at the park, or just going with you on errands and to visit friends can do wonders for your dog's confidence. Have guests over who are willing to help with this problem.
- When he's excited, ignore him until he's calm.

## Changing the Behavior

How can you identify and avoiding the stimuli that lead to submissive urination? Everyone (e.g., owners, their friends, veterinary caregivers) who interacts with dogs that exhibit this behavior should avoid doing anything that promotes urination. Humans should speak softly, avoid prolonged eye contact and kneel to avoid towering over these dogs. Ignoring these dogs for the first 5 minutes after arriving home may prevent over excitement. These dogs should not be reached for, especially over the head. They should be petted under the chin, on the chest. and on the side of the neck.

<sup>1</sup> This client information sheet is based on material written by Debra Horwitz, DVM, DACVB and Gary Landsberg, DVM, DACVB @ Copyright 2002 Lifelearn Inc. Used with permission under license. March 17, 2004. Rutland Veterinary Clinic and Surgical Center, 90 E. Pittsford Road, Rutland, VT 05701 Phone(802)773-2779 Fax(802)773-0485 [www.rutlandvet.com](http://www.rutlandvet.com)