



Submissive Urination in Dogs

Kelley Bollen, MS, CABC, Director of Behavior Programs, Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program, Cornell University

Some dogs will submissively urinate when they are approached by people. This is often seen in puppies, young females, insecure dogs, or dogs who have been repeatedly corrected. The cause of this behavior is that the urinary sphincter relaxes during stress.

If your puppy or dog urinates when you approach her try the following:

1. Keep all greetings and departures calm and brief.
2. During greetings your body posture should be non-threatening. Squat down and turn sideways.
3. Let the dog come to you instead of you approaching her.
4. Avoid prolonged eye contact when greeting (this is threatening to dog).
5. Do not pet the dog on her head or back during greeting (this is a subtle form of asserting dominance over dogs). Pet her under her chin, behind her ears, or on her chest.
6. Do not praise the dog (petting, voice etc.) during submissive urination. This will reinforce the behavior. Saying "its okay Fluffy, don't be scared" only tells Fluffy that you are happy with the submissive behavior. You should IGNORE submissive behaviors.

DO NOT PUNISH THE DOG UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE !

7. Eliminate odor where dog has urinated using an enzymatic cleaner.

Counter-conditioning process:

Start when your dog has an empty bladder

- Squat down and hold a treat in hand and ignore the dog
- Let her come to you to get the treat
- Tell her to sit and give it the treat
- Repeat this over and over until she is comfortable coming to you, and sitting.

Have all members of the family and then a few friends go through this counter-conditioning. Our goal is to change your dog's greeting behavior from one of submission to one of confidence. Repeatedly being rewarded with a food treat for sitting will build her confidence, in addition to the fact that a dog is less likely to urinate if she is sitting.

