



BEHAVIOR  
SERIES

# Dealing with Submissive and Excitement Urination

**M**OST PET OWNERS APPRECIATE an enthusiastic welcome from their dogs at the end of the day. But their pleasure can be substantially lessened when their dogs' wiggles of delight are coupled with a puddle of urine requiring cleanup. Your dog may have passed his housetraining with flying colors yet still not be able to control his bladder in certain situations. Submissive and excitement urination are not housetraining problems; they are involuntary reflexes that require patience and specific training methods to correct.

## Submissive Urination

With one second left in the championship game, the basketball player has to make one free throw to send the game into overtime and keep her team's hopes for victory alive. A hush comes over the arena while beads of sweat roll down her face. It's the first time she's been in this situation. She shoots the ball...and it clangs off the rim...

Just as an athlete may make a mistake when her confidence wanes in a daunting situation, so too may a dog. A dog who is threatened and lacks confidence may urinate out of submission. He may also urinate when he's being punished or verbally scolded, or when he's approached by someone he perceives to be a threat.

And just as the athlete will gain confidence as she plays in more high-pressure situations, your dog's submissive urination may resolve itself as he gains confidence. You can help to build his confidence by teaching him commands and rewarding him for obeying. 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.

## Your Dog May Have a Submissive Urination Problem If:

- He urinates when he's being scolded.
- He urinates when someone approaches him.
- He urinates when he's being greeted.
- He has a history of being treated roughly or being punished long after he has displayed unwanted behaviors.
- He is a somewhat shy, anxious, or timid dog.
- He urinates while making submissive postures, such as crouching, tail tucking, or rolling over and exposing his belly.

## What to Do If Your Dog Has a Submissive Urination Problem

- Take your dog to the veterinarian to rule out medical reasons for the behavior.
- Keep greetings low-key.
- Encourage and reward confident postures (sitting, standing) from him.
- Give him an alternative to behaving submissively. For example, if he knows a few commands, have him "sit" or "shake" as you approach, and reward him for obeying.

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