

Dog: Submissive and Excitement Urination



What Is Submissive Urination

Submissive urination is a fear-related appeasement behavior that happens when a dog feels threatened—regardless of whether or not the threat is real or only exists in the dog's head. Dogs may do this both in reaction to people and to other dogs, for example when a young puppy meets an adult dog.

Your dog may be submissively urinating if it happens when he's greeted, petted, reached for, scolded, or it looks like he has rolled over for a belly rub. The body language to look for is cowering, ears held back, head held low, and rolling over.

What Is Excitement Urination

Excitement urination most often happens during greetings and playtime, and isn't accompanied by submissive posturing. Excitement urination usually resolves as the dog matures and gains more bladder control and/or is exposed to more new people and situations, provided the problem isn't made worse by punishment or inadvertent reinforcement.

What You Can Do

If your dog has a problem with submissive or excitement urination, start by consulting your vet to rule out medical reasons. Next, here are some Do's and Don'ts:

Do...

- Keep greetings low key and only gradually expose your dog to new people and situations. Let your dog set the pace and reward any sign of confidence.
- Speak in a calm, relaxed tone of voice, low-pitched at low volume.
- Play and greet outdoors until the problem is resolved to avoid accidents.
- Make interactions predictable for your dog by giving him an alternative behavior for greeting and hanging out with you, e.g., have him sit as you (or others) approach, then reward him.
- If your dog is getting overly excited, ignore him until he calms down.
- Build your dog's confidence with fun activities like agility, flyball, or tricks classes.
- Pet your dog under the chin, not on the top of the head.

Don't...

- Look directly at your dog when you approach him. To dogs, direct eye contact is a threatening or aggressive body posture. Look to the side instead.
- Hover or tower over your dog. Instead of leaning over from the waist, get down to his level by bending your knees so you seem small and approachable and turn your body to the side.
- Punish or scold your dog—it will only make the problem worse.

Until the problem resolves, you can protect your carpets with a plastic drop cloth or an absorbent material in the entryway where accidents are most likely.