

SUBMISSIVE URINATION

Submissive urination is NOT a house-training problem. It is exhibited during greetings, either because the dog instinctively feels a need to show submission, or when the dog loses control due to being excited. Submissive urination or "Happy Bladder" is not a willful behavior, and punishment can make it worse.

Many dogs outgrow submissive urination by about a year of age if you don't make a fuss. Meanwhile, here are some things you can do.

- First of all, take your dog for a physical check to make sure there is not a bladder infection.
- Don't raise your voice or scold your dog for peeing. This will make the problem worse.
- If the submissive urination happens when you come home, try to make your homecoming low key. When you come in, do not greet the dog right away and do not make eye contact. Wait until the dog calms down. You can let the dog outside in a matter of fact way without any fuss.
- Or, greet the dog outside to avoid a puddle indoors. If you do have to clean up a puddle, do it calmly without fussing.
- When petting the dog, use a gentle scratch on the chest instead of patting on the head. Try not to lean over the dog.
- If your dog is a bit timid, allow the dog to approach you, rather than your making the first overture, so that the dog's safety zone is allowed to remain intact -- advise any guests to do the same. Kneel or sit down so you are on his level, turn your head away from the dog, and let him approach you.
- If your dog is overwhelmed by guests, make sure he has a comfortable place to retreat to, such as a crate.
- For now, avoid direct eye contact. In dog language, eye contact can be threatening. You can teach your dog to accept and welcome friendly eye contact later.
- Do not over-stimulate or push the dog too far too fast. Let the dog regulate how close he can get to other people, places and things.

If your dog continues to have this problem, you need to practice some confidence building and trust building exercises. Rewarding calm behavior goes a long way too.

Pat Scott