

## SUBMISSIVE URINATION

This dog has shown signs of submissive urination, which is the spontaneous and unintentional release of urine. This should not be confused with house training problems.

When confronted with an alarming, stressful, or exciting situation, the dog may squat and relieve him/herself. This is not a voluntary action; it is the involuntary release of the sphincter muscle. The dog is actually offering a submissive gesture to appease higher pack members.

Punishment will only make matters worse; instead, you need to build the dog's confidence to the point where urination is not necessary, from the dog's point of view. Here are some guidelines to help eliminate the problem.

- If the dog has a tendency to submissively urinate upon greeting, make the greeting very low key, and avoid eye contact with the dog.
  - Don't greet the dog upon entering a room—instead, ignore the dog completely until the dog's excitement level has dropped naturally. This means averting your gaze and, if necessary, your entire head! Don't pet the dog.
  - If the dog still urinates, then arrange to enter the house in a room other than the one the dog is in. Make some noise, including talking to the dog. When you do open the door, keep your gaze averted, and walk to a spot where the dog can eliminate. Sit down, and wait for the inevitable. Then you can pet and play with the dog.
- If the dog submissively urinates because of a particular loud noise, you'll need to desensitize the dog to the sound.
  - Begin by recording the noise; then play it back at a very low level, just enough for you to hear. While it's playing, divert the dog with a toy or treat. When the dog is no longer responding to the noise, raise the level, and start the process all over again.
  - Put the dog on a regular schedule and stick with it. This includes feeding, playtime, walks, and bedtime.
  - Be consistent. Make sure everyone in the household knows the rules that the dog has to follow. Commands should be consistent as well. Obedience classes teach the dog what the owner expects, and the owner how to get the desired response from the dog.
  - Don't get angry. The behavior will NOT go away through punishment; it will get worse.
  - Play games that increase the dog's confidence. Limited tug of war is good for dogs that are submissive (not for dominant dogs, though) and lots of ball playing.