

# Submissive & Excitement Urination & Other Elimination Issues

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Just because your dog is having a problem that involves urine, doesn't mean he's having a housebreaking problem. Submissive urination, excitement urination, marking and spay incontinence are all behavior or medical problems that just happen to involve urine. Treating them as "housebreaking problems" will not make them go away, and may make them worse.

**Submissive urination** occurs when a dog feels threatened. It may occur when he's being punished or verbally scolded, or when he's approached by someone he perceives to be threatening to him. It's important to remember that this response is based on the dog's perception of a threat, not the person's actual intention. Submissive urination may resolve as your dog 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 of his new experiences are positive and happy.

## Your Dog May Be Submissively Urinating If:

Urination occurs when he's being scolded.

Urination occurs when he's being greeted.

Urination occurs when someone approaches him.

He is a somewhat shy, anxious or timid dog.

He has a history of rough treatment or punishment after the fact.

The urination is accompanied by submissive postures, such as crouching or rolling over and exposing his belly.

## What To Do If Your Dog Has A Submissive Urination Problem:

1. Take your dog to the vet to rule out medical reasons for the behavior.
2. Keep greetings low-key.
3. Encourage and reward confident postures from him.
4. 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.
5. Avoid approaching him with postures that he reads as dominant, for example:
6. Avoid direct eye contact – look at his back or tail instead.
7. Get down on his level by bending at the knees rather than leaning over from the waist and ask others to approach him in the same way.
8. Pet him under the chin rather than on top of the head.
9. Approach him from the side, rather than from the front, and/or present the side of your body to him, rather than your full front.
10. Don't punish or scold him - this will only make the problem worse.

**Excitement urination** is different from submissive urination and occurs most often during greetings and playtime and is not accompanied by submissive posturing. Excitement urination usually resolves on its own as a dog matures, if it's not made worse by punishment or inadvertent reinforcement.

## Your Dog May Have An Excitement Urination Problem If:

Urination occurs when your dog is excited, for example during greetings or during playtime.

Urination occurs when your dog is less than one year old.

## What To Do If Your Dog Has An Excitement Urination Problem:

1. Keep greetings low-key.
2. Don't punish or scold him.

3. To avoid accidents, play outdoors until the problem is resolved.
4. Take your dog to the veterinarian to rule out medical reasons for the behavior.
5. Ignore him until he's calm

## Marking

Marking is a behavior problem that involves urine. It may have nothing to do with housebreaking and an otherwise housebroken dog may mark or begin marking suddenly. Although marking is more common in unneutered males, neutered males or females (spayed or unspayed) may also mark. Dogs mark to mark territory. Generally, they mark where another dog has marked, dousing the other mark with their own mark. Stopping this behavior involves eliminating opportunities for him to mark.

### What To Do If Your Dog Has a Marking Problem:

1. Restrict or eliminate access to areas he is known to mark.
2. If your dog is unneutered, neutering may solve the problem.
3. Clean areas where he has marked thoroughly with an enzymatic cleaner like "Nature's Miracle or Oxy Clean. If you do not kill the enzymes in the urine, he will return to that spot. If you have other dogs that have had accidents in your home, clean those areas before you bring your new dog home.
4. Move his food bowl to the area where he has been marking. Having him associate the area with feeding may prevent him from returning to the area.
5. If you see him begin to mark, interrupt him with a loud clap and a disappointed "No." And then take him outside. While it's okay to scold him for his behavior, and to interrupt the behavior, punishing him or getting angry will not help.

## Spay Incontinence

Spay incontinence is a medical issue commonly seen in spayed females (and sometimes males with prostate issues). It can develop shortly after a spay surgery or years later as the dog ages. Spay incontinence involves a leaky bladder. As many as 20% of spayed females may eventually develop spay incontinence, particularly as they age. The dog may be completely housebroken otherwise, but may suddenly begin trailing urine, or wake up from a nap in a puddle of urine, or you may find that she had wet her bed. This may happen frequently or infrequently. Spay incontinence is NOT a behavior problem or a housebreaking problem.

### What To Do If Your Dog Has Spay Incontinence:

1. Do NOT punish your dog if she is showing signs of spay incontinence. Simply clean up the accident and, if necessary, bathe your dog.
2. Take your dog to the vet. If your dog's spay incontinence is infrequent, you may decide to simply live with the problem. If your dog's spay incontinence is frequent or especially problematic, your vet may prescribe medication.

**An Absolute Rule:** Any sudden change in your dog's elimination habits should mean a visit to your vet. Ruling out medical problems or treating a medical problem can go a long way in helping you with any elimination issue.