

## **Submissive Urination**

Chris Barnhart

When your dog meets a person or another dog, the first thing he does is determine where he should be in the group hierarchy--a pack animal's social structure. Dogs will communicate their position by displaying submissive or dominant behaviors. Urinating is part of the language to let you know he will take the more submissive status.

Since this message is one of surrender, punishing or correcting would only make matters worse. Patience and consistency are important as we teach the dog new behaviors. We need to help the dog see us as less threatening, and give him experiences that will increase his self-confidence.

## Greeting People

When you first come home to your dog, downplay your greeting. Quietly ignore him for a few minutes while you hang up your coat, look at the mail, etc. Your dog will have a chance to get some of his initial excitement out of the way before interacting with you. An excited puppy can temporarily lose bladder control, see your displeasure and signal submission with more urinating. When you do greet your dog, do it in a way that will make you seem less powerful: avoid direct eye contact, stand by his side rather than in front of him, drop down

to his level, talk gently and pet him on his shoulder or underneath his chin. Keep your reaction to his urinating neutral, and clean it up casually.

Use a product like Nature's Miracle, Petastic or Simple Solution (liquids you pour on the spot) to break down the urine molecules so your dog doesn't pick up the scent of "Bathroom Spot". Many stain and odor removers do fine for our noses, but not for a dog's.

You can practice a couple of exercises to help your dog learn to greet other people in a more confident way:

- 1) This first exercise will help your dog learn to see people as less dominant. Have a friend stand across the room (or yard) from you. With your dog on leash, walk toward your friend. When you arrive, you and your friend drop down and reassure your dog--gently petting, praising, etc. Your friend can offer a treat if you'd like. This helps your dog learn that people are not dangerous, and that he does not need to display extreme submissiveness. Hand the leash to your friend and both slowly stand up. You walk away to the other side of the room. Your dog is with your friend, learning to trust that person. (The more people your dog learns to trust, the more confident he will be in meeting new people). Your friend can now give your dog what he wants--to be back with you--by walking your dog to you. Again, you both drop down, reassure your dog, hand

off the leash and stand up together. Repeat this exercise several times per session.

2) When meeting people with your dog on leash, give your dog the feedback he needs to learn proper greeting behavior. Keep him within arm's length by praising when he is maintaining a slack leash, and by correcting him when he pulls at the leash or tries to jump on the other person. Once your dog has calmed down and the initial excitement has subsided, walk him over to greet the person. Ask that person to allow your dog to approach without them moving toward your dog or making direct eye contact. This will give your dog a greater sense of control. Give your dog some slack in the leash so he can choose the path for the greeting (maybe from the side), and have space and time to communicate with body language. You can also ask that person to drop down for the greeting to seem less dominant.

### Greeting Other Dogs

When dogs are allowed to greet each other off leash, they can apply many of their natural social signals to communicate submissiveness or dominance. For example, dogs approach one another in a circular pattern, not straight on. They may sniff, vocalize, posture, and use eye contact to determine where each stands in the social hierarchy.

In a safe environment, allow your dog to meet other friendly dogs off leash. This will give your dog the opportunity to learn behaviors other than submissive urination to communicate. Often, other friendly dogs are the best teachers through modeling appropriate behaviors.