

SUPER-SUBMISSION

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Dogs inherit their temperament from their parents. Individuals may be dominant or submissive, or anywhere along the continuum between these extremes. The most well adjusted dogs have neither an overly dominant nor an extremely submissive nature. Dogs that tend to be dominant may growl or snap when challenged, while submissive dogs defer to the challenger.

Submissive dogs defer to dominant dogs by rolling over, exposing the belly and possibly urinating. This may happen when the dog greets you, when he is punished, or in any situation in which he wishes to acknowledge you as a dominant member of his pack. Submissive urination, while annoying, is really a high compliment to you, as it indicates that your dog accepts you as his leader. Submissive urination will decrease as the dog matures, and by 2 years of age most super-submissive dogs have gained enough confidence that urination may no longer occur.

CAUSES OF SUPER-SUBMISSION

1. INHERITANCE

The dog inherits a submissive temperament from its parents.

2. DISCIPLINE

A dog that is by nature submissive, will become even more so when disciplined. These dogs may urinate copiously when punished.

3. GENDER

This problem is more common in female dogs, although the occasional male may be super-submissive.

TREATING SUPER-SUBMISSION

1. OBEDIENCE TRAIN

Teach your dog to come, sit, stay and down-stay, off the leash. Take 10-15 minutes twice daily to do obedience training. Use food rewards, and make the sessions fun for both you and your dog. Trained dogs are generally more confident.

2. NEVER DISCIPLINE A SUBMISSIVE DOG

If the dog is doing something you don't want, distract it by calling it to you and having it sit or lie down. Then you can reward the dog for responding to your command. This will increase the dog's confidence. If you discipline a submissive dog, you will make it even more submissive and, in doing so, compound the problem.

3. ENCOURAGE DOMINANCE

Do this by playing games (especially tug-of-war and wrestling games), by petting the dog, and by feeding the dog free-choice. Your dog will naturally become more dominant as she gets older, and as this happens submissive behavior will decrease.

4. CONTROL GREETING BEHAVIOR

Most cases of submissive urination occur when the dog is welcoming people at the door. You can deal with this situation in several different ways. You can ignore your dog when you arrive home, until she is calm. When she is quiet, call her to you and greet her from a crouched position, which is less threatening to the dog. Try to make your arrival a matter-of-fact event, in order to avoid exciting your dog.

If you wish to greet your dog as soon as you arrive home, you could try throwing a treat, like a cheesie, behind the dog as she bounds toward you. This will distract the dog, and give her something to do other than rolling over and urinating. This technique works best if the dog is hungry, and therefore interested in the food.

You could train the dog, by using food rewards, to do something that is incompatible with submissive urination when she greets you. You might want to train her to stand with her front paws on a chair, or to stand with all four paws on the ground.

You will have to decide which of the above greeting techniques will work best for you and your dog. Whichever one you choose, it is important to reduce the excitement level when you arrive home. The more excited your dog is, the harder it is for her to learn what you expect of her, and the more likely she is to urinate.

The advantage of a problem like super-submission is that, even if you do nothing, your dog will tend to outgrow submissive urination. However, by using the above techniques, you can eliminate the unwanted behavior at a much earlier age.