Fearful and Excitement Urination

Fearful Urination

Fearful 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. Fearful urination may resolve as your dog gains confidence, but you can help build confidence through Nothing in Life is Free, which is when you teach him commands and then have him perform a command in exchange for something, like food or going outside (see our handout: "Nothing in Life is Free"). You should gradually expose him to new people and new situations, making sure all of his new experiences are positive and happy, while also counter conditioning him to respond differently to situations that normally make him pee.

Your dog may be fearfully 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 (doesn't settle down or is easily scared).
- He has a history of rough treatment or punishment after the fact.
- The urination is accompanied by appeasing postures, such as crouching or rolling over to expose his belly.

What to do if your dog has a fearful urination problem:

- Take your dog to the vet to rule out medical reasons for the behavior.
- Keep greetings low key.
- Practice Nothing in Life is Free and do clicker training (see our handout: "Dog Clicker Training").
- Encourage and reward confident postures from him.
- Give him an alternative to behaving fearful. For example, if he knows a few commands, have him "sit" or "shake" as you approach, and reward him for performing the behavior.
- Avoid approaching him with postures that he reads as threatening, for example:
    - Avoid direct eye contact. Look at his back or tail instead.
    - Get down on his level by bending at the knees rather than leaning over from the waist and ask others to approach him the same way.
    - Pet him under the chin rather than on top of the head.
- As you approach, present the side of your body to him, rather than your full front, and avert your gaze.
    - Until the problem resolves, you might want to protect your carpet by placing a plastic drop cloth or an absorbent material in the entryway where the accidents are most likely to occur. Alternatively, you can purchase "doggie diapers" at your local pet supply store.

What not to do:

- Do not punish or scold him. This will only make the problem worse.

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Excitement Urination

Excitement urination occurs most often during greetings and playtime and is not accompanied by appeasing posturing. Excitement urination usually resolves on its own as a dog matures, as long as it isn't 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.
- Your dog is less than 1 year old.
- Your dog tends to be anxious in general (doesn't settle down or is easily scared).

What to do if your dog has an excitement urination problem:

- Take your dog to the veterinarian to rule out medical reasons for the behavior.
- Keep greetings low key.
- Practice Nothing in Life is Free and do clicker training.
- To avoid accidents, play and greet outdoors until the problem is resolved.
- Until the problem resolves, you might want to protect your carpet by placing a plastic drop cloth or an absorbent material in the entryway where the accidents are most likely to occur. Alternatively, you can purchase "doggie diapers" at your local pet supply store.
- Ignore him until he's calm.

What not to do:

- Do not punish or scold him.

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