

# canine questions

By Sharon Harvey

**Q** Every time I come home and greet my dog, she meets me at the door and piddles on my Birkenstocks! Is there anything I can do to save my shoes?

**A** As going barefoot is not an option in Northeast Ohio, at least for several months a year, we'll focus on the behavior! Whether it's Birkenstocks or Nikes it's called submissive urination. If your dog is young, lacks confidence, and/or lacks experience as to your routines and behavior, submissive urination is a way for her to show you that she knows you're the leader.

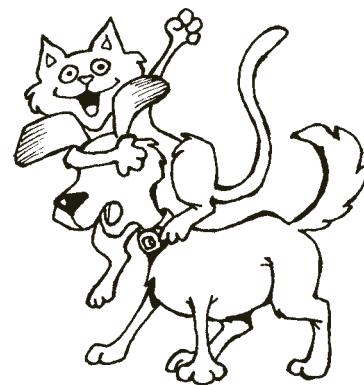
Submissive urination is most commonly seen during greetings, when being praised, in times of great excitement, or when being punished or scolded. While submissive urination can be an indicator that training techniques or punishments have been unnecessarily harsh, it is more likely a sign of insecurity. In many cases, but not all, dogs may outgrow the behavior as they mature and become more confident.

Getting rid of the problem requires trying to identify the cause and eliminating it. If yelling, scolding, gruff or highly excitable voices, or threatening or quick movements seem to prompt the behavior, these will have to be replaced with positive reinforcement training to rebuild her confidence. Start by ignoring your dog's bad behavior, unless it's harmful to her or another person or animal, and reward all of her good behavior with treats. As hard as it may be, you will also need to ignore the piddling while you're working to eliminate it.

Start by completely ignoring her for the first few minutes after you arrive home. Until you've solved the problem, it might be best to confine her to a room where the after-greeting clean-up is easy. After a few days of ignoring her completely, start to add a calm, quiet verbal greeting to your homecoming routine, but avoid making eye contact. Once she's piddle-free at this step, you can try to make brief eye contact while speaking to her. Finally, add a calm pat on her chest or under her chin. You must avoid standing tall over her, staring at her and making fast, bold moves to pat her on her head or shoulders. All of these postures imply dominance and may trigger her urination.

At the same time you're working on the above steps, work on training her to perform an incompatible behavior. For example, teach her to sit or lie down before all greetings. Piddling is much more difficult from these positions! In order to eliminate the problem completely, it's very likely that you'll have to abandon the exuberant homecomings forever.

Finally, if all else fails, take her out into the snow this winter and have your homecoming greetings outside. Who knows, you may find she has just been trying to send you a message!!!



**If you're having a problem with your cat or dog,** call the Rescue Village HelpLine at 440.338.4819, ext. 13 or send an e-mail to [askthetrainer@geaugahumane.org](mailto:askthetrainer@geaugahumane.org). We'll help you solve your problem or refer you to someone who can. The most frequently asked questions will find their way into the Rescue Village Reporter's Ask the Trainer column or onto Q104's Ask the Trainer radio segment that can be heard on Sunday's Wilde & Fee Morning Show during the 8 o'clock hour.

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To foster compassion for all living things through education

To reduce pet overpopulation through spay/neuter programs

To prevent cruelty by advocating and enforcing animal protection laws

