

This is not a housetraining lapse but the spontaneous and unintentional release of urine. **Punishing your dog will only make the problem worse.**

WHY?

When confronted with alarming, stressful, or exciting situations, some dogs may squat, relieve themselves, or dribble urination. It is not a voluntary action; rather it is an involuntary release of the sphincter muscle. This kind of urination is a very submissive gesture of appeasement.

What triggers submissive urination?

- Eye-contact - direct, staring
- Vocalisation - excited, happy talk
- Looming - big body postures
- Touch - with hands
- Approach - especially during home-comings and greetings

IMPORTANT: Punishment only makes it worse. By urinating the dog is already offering a submissive gesture. The owner will need to build up the dog's confidence to the point where urination is not necessary. If the dog is managed correctly and the triggers are avoided, this problem can solve itself.

How to fix submissive urination?

Avoid all the triggers above. Always instruct strangers and visitors to "ignore" the dog. In a greeting context, ask your dog to do something else to divert his attention and to prevent elimination:

- **Fetch toy** - can simply be used as a counter command if "Fetch" has already been pre-trained. It elicits play/predation
- **Treat** - elicits eating
- **Tug** - elicits predation

What to do?

Since the triggers are eye contact, talk, body posture, touch, approach and the reaction is an involuntary one, it falls to the owner to help the dog.

If the dog has a tendency to urinate upon greeting, make the greeting a very low-key affair. Assess the way you usually greet the dog and then try to focus on the following:

- Avoid eye contact
- Do not excite the dog with a lot of high baby talk
- Do not approach the dog straight on, try and “curve” instead
- Do not touch the dog
- Do not approach with a dominant body posture, loom or bend over the dog

Do not greet the dog on entering. The dog will probably come up to you so ignore him, avoid eye contact and even turn your head to the side. Keep quiet and do not bend over or reach down to touch the dog.

What you are doing is waiting for the dog's excitement level to drop naturally. Once the dog is calm, acknowledge him briefly.

Other options

If the dog is still urinating, try to enter the house through an alternative entry point to where you keep the dog. Let the dog know you are there. Once you get close to your dog, avoid eye contact and do not approach the dog, but walk to a place where the dog can urinate and let him follow you and eliminate. 🌐

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) is a non-profit organisation dedicated to make Hong Kong a kinder environment for animals. Because we are not a Government Department and animal charities do not qualify for membership in the Community Chest, we must rely on YOU. Please consider all of the animals in need of food, shelter, and medical care and help us make a difference in their lives.