

Ask Cheryl

Animal behavior tips

This week:
Pepper's Piddling Problem



Q Our dog Pepper is still not housebroken at two years old. She goes to the bathroom outside most of the time, but when she greets people she always pees. I know she knows to go outside, but it's like she gets so excited she forgets. Is there anything we can do?

A Pepper sounds like she is housebroken. Her problem is most likely what we in the animal world call submissive urination. My dog growing up had this problem, and we referred to it as piddling. Whatever you want to call it, it's not a housebreaking issue, but a behavior one. These dogs tend to wind sideways as they go up to greet people. Some wiggle all over while piddling. These dogs usually have one thing in common, they are shy or have a submissive personality. The good news is there is a way to solve the problem. The part of the news most people don't want to hear is that it can take time, just as any training does.

Of course, the first thing you should always do before starting a behavior modification program is to rule out any medical problems. Have your vet check out Pepper to make sure she doesn't have a urinary health issue.

Once you've ruled out a medical problem, then you can start to work on building Pepper's confidence. Since motivational speakers do not help much in the animal world, you will need to become your dog's cheerleader. Encourage and reward any confident posture Pepper demonstrates during the day - sits, head up while standing in front of people, etc. If she tends to cower to the ground when she comes up to you (not necessarily an indication that she has ever been hit, by the way - some dogs just naturally have submissive behavior), ask her to do a sit. Reward her for sitting. By asking your dog to be in a more confident position, you reduce the likelihood of her exhibiting any submissive urination.

Also keep all greetings very low-key. Taffy, my dog growing up, was always enthusiastically greeted by my mom with a high pitch voice and lots of ta-doo made over the dog - hence the "cute" word of piddling. When I came home, I was not met by piddles as I ignored Taffy until I came in, put my books down, took off my coat, and then said hello to Taffy once she had calmed down. Now, mind you, this was not because I was a great trainer at the age of twelve. It had more to do with not wanting to clean up the floor every time I entered the house. Laziness is how I

stumbled onto the concept of ignoring as a great training tool. I know it's hard to ignore a cute dog dancing around your feet when you first come home from a long day, but the pay off is well worth the effort. (Remember ignoring is also a tool to be used for those over-enthusiastic jumping greeters, not just the piddlers of the world.)

Avoid using dominant postures when interacting with Pepper. Direct eye contact can be considered dominant, so look at her tail or back instead. Getting down at the dog's level and letting her come to you (no eye contact) can also make the situation less scary for the dog and reduce the likelihood of piddling. Turn your body sideways as you allow the dog to approach. This indicates to the dog you mean no harm. Pet Pepper under her chin instead of over her head which can be less intimidating to a dog. Make sure everyone interacting with Pepper does the same thing.

Never punish the dog for submissive urination. In the dog world, this behavior is not considered bad. It is the dog's way of letting another dog know none harm is intended. Scolding will most likely make the dog only more submissive and increase the amount of piddling. Instead if the dog begins to piddle, just stop what you are doing and walk away - usually to go get some paper towels and Nature's Miracle!

While you are working on eliminating this problem, you may want to make sure that wherever your dog will come in contact with you or other visitors there is a tile floor so clean up is easier. Perhaps put the dog on a leash and have visitors first greet the dog on the front porch. Ask the dog to sit, and remind your visitors on proper greeting protocols for Pepper. Soon she'll be sitting pretty to greet with no piddles in sight. Good luck.

Meet Cheryl At Happy Tails
Every Monday!

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2008 Fluvanna County & Lake Monticello Real Estate Market Report

A year-end comprehensive Real Estate Market Report has been compiled by Strong Team Realtors, offering official real estate data specific to Fluvanna County and Lake Monticello. This 20-page report looks back at the local 2008 real estate market and compares it to 2007. The report is intended to show where the real estate market has been, where it stands currently, and where it might be going in 2009.

Included in the Report is information regarding average sales price, market inventory, number of sales, sales prices vs. listing prices, days on market, highest sales broken down into price ranges, and even a section on area waterfront home sales.

"As real estate professionals, we know how important it is to have the most up-to-date data available," said Daniel

Rothamel, Strong Team Realtors. "We first create this report every quarter for our clients, and use the data that we compile on a daily basis to manage their sales. However, we feel that the quarterly data reports, and certainly the year-end reports, are too important not to share with all homeowners in the County. We also see the need for this type of report since no other report created by the Charlottesville Area Assoc. of Realtors is specific to Fluvanna County and Lake Monticello."

The Report is Free to any one who requests a copy. No charge, no obligation. You may drop by the Strong Team Realtors' office located near the CVS on Route 600 - South Boston Rd., call 434-589-5800 or email for a copy: Stats@StrongTeamRealtors.com.

Caring for Creatures Pet of the Week

Josie
Female



The cats of the Ernest Hemingway Museum are so popular and so well-known that the nickname "Hemingway Cats" has often been given to polydactyls. Polydactyl is latin for "many digits." Instead of the normal 18 toes (five on each front foot and four on the rear) found on most cats, polydacts have six or more toes on the front feet and sometimes an extra toe on the rear. This is Josie's claim to fame.

Josie arrived at Caring For Creatures in July of 2008. She was part of a colony of cats in Louisa who were not properly cared for. Josie is a domestic short hair, spayed and up to date on vaccines. At seven months old, she still has alot of kitten in her but the manners and temperament of a young adult. She is known to be sweet and cuddly by staff and volunteers alike and one who gets along well with the other cats in her room. Josie welcomes visits from anyone looking to give a loving home to a very loving kitty.

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