

Article 3

Socialization skills will help Penelope's submissiveness

Dear Gus,

My dog, Penelope, is a 2 1/2 year old purebred standard female dachshund. Unfortunately, due to her habit of urinating a small amount when she sees a visitor, we now call her Penelope the Piddler.

This has been going on since we first got her, when she was about eight-weeks-old. She is housebroken, except for this issue, and eliminates when she is taken outside. We asked our vet about this, and he said that she might grow out of it - but, after 2 years, she hasn't. She even piddled next to Mitch Goldblatt's shoe one time - and boy, was that embarrassing. What can we do?

Diane C.  
Orange

Dear Diane,

Although Penelope's problem is troubling, it is not uncommon. At 2 years, the first step is to have your veterinarian examine her to rule out any medical condition, for example urinary track problems. If there is no medical cause, then this is usually a socialization problem, and an example of submissive urination. The next time you expect a visitor advise the visitor of this ahead of time to ignore the dog. This should create a sense of curiosity in Penelope, and she should approach the visitor. Do not approach her. When Penelope approaches your visitors, they should present themselves as small as possible by knelling down. Keep your tone of voice very soft and calm, and avoid direct eye contact. When Penelope licks or sniffs the visitor, a quiet "good girl" is sufficient, and you should all go about your visit.

Repeating this process will help to build Penelope's confidence, and hopefully in a short period of time, the water-works will be a memory.

Hope this helps.

Gus

Gus Marnel of Milford is a registered professional trainer and a member of the Professional Dog Trainers Association.

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