

TRAINING YOUR TIMID DOG

A timid dog is one who is submissive to other dogs, sometimes submissive with people and is easily intimidated by unusual sights or sounds. Within the framework of the pack this dog would fall toward the bottom half of the order. This does not make him a “wimp” or a dog of less value. Each member of the pack is important. Your timid dog may find it uncomfortable to give you eye contact. In canine language eye contact is a sign of confidence; sustained eye contact can be a sign of aggression. He may roll onto his back and expose his belly if he feels you are upset with him. This is just his way of deferring to you. He may even “piddle” a bit when you greet him upon entering the house. This submissive urination is one of the most dramatic signs of submissive.

There are three general reasons that your dog may act submissive. First, he may simply be genetically submissive, i.e. he was born with that trait. Secondly, he may have had inadequate socialization as a puppy, leaving him overwhelmed by the world around him. And last, he may be exhibiting fears because of trauma experienced during his formative months as a puppy.

Regardless of how your dog has become timid, using the correct training methods is vitally important. Maintain a less intimidating posture with him by squatting or kneeling down to interact with him. Instead of reaching over his head to pet him, reach under his chin or rub his chest. From a canine’s point of view, this is much more reassuring. Keep your voice gentle but firm, never raising your voice in anger. An angry voice can set back his trust level and his training. You need to help your dog to feel safe at all times.

When training your timid dog you should use praise almost exclusively. Build his confidence by celebrating every success no matter how small. You should be quite careful about corrections. An angry “No!” or quick grab of the collar may be fine for many dogs but a timid dog takes those negatives way too seriously. You have probably already noticed how sensitive your dog can be to a correction. Correct your timid dog calmly but firmly. Be gentle when guiding him into positions such as sit and down.

Along with the training methods outlined here, there are other things that can raise your dog’s confidence level. Basic training can be rewarding and stimulating, giving your dog confidence when he learns how to work with you well. A game of tug with a rope toy can be helpful if you let him win. This game is a real no-no for confident or dominant dogs but can help your timid dog feel more sure of himself.

With your thoughtful approach to training and your understanding of the timid canine’s point of view you can customize your training approach for the best possible results.