

Housebreaking My Hound

Pups need time to learn the logistics of leg lifting.

Jon Geller, DVM

Q. I have an 8-month-old male Cocker Spaniel who still does not lift his leg when I take him outside to pee. He's housetrained, so he doesn't have accidents in the house at all. But outside he won't lift his leg! Sometimes he pees on his front leg! Is this normal?

How can I get him to lift his leg? Should I wait for him to figure it out himself? I have no other male dogs that could "teach" him. Any suggestions? Also, now that he is older I am not sure how often to feed him? Any advice would be greatly appreciated.

A. I am afraid that leg-lifting is a habit that your young dog has to figure out for himself. It is not uncommon for some male dogs to squat down to urinate, but it is unusual for them to urinate on themselves. Maybe you could give him a little assistance with this maneuver.

This "leg lift" is actually a like yoga pose I did in my class yesterday. If an old dog like me can learn a new trick, certainly your youngster can also. However, if he never figures it out, I wouldn't worry about it.

As far as dog food goes, most puppies are ready to switch to an adult diet at around 1 year of age. You can feed him in measured feedings twice a day.

There is no exact amount to feed, but start with what is recommended by the dog food manufacturer, then monitor your dog's body condition and weight. If he seems constantly hungry and a little on the lean side then by all means, feed him more. If he seems to be packing on extra weight, despite normal activity, then reduce the amount you feed. It's that simple, but as your dog grows older you may need to switch to a high-fiber food that allows your dog to eat more but with fewer calories.

Best,
Jon Geller, DVM

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