

# Why Do Some Male Dogs Squat to Pee?

by Christopher F. Lapinel



*"You can bring a dog to a fire hydrant..."*

The familiar posture of a male dog urinating is a bit odd if you think about it. People take it for granted, like the sky being blue. But one day you realized: Rex doesn't spritz fire hydrants. Don't worry: unless hunkering in the grass is new, he's perfectly normal.

## **Social Networking for Dogs**

No one knows exactly why dogs lift their legs to mark. Canine experts offer various theories. One explanation, which makes the least sense, is that they do this in an effort to avoid peeing on themselves. Most dogs, however, are not so fastidious. A more rational angle, proposed by Marty Becker, DVM, is that the higher your dog aims the more likely the scent is to carry in the wind and attract, warn and inform other dogs in the vicinity. Dr. Anneke Lisberg and Dr. Charles Snowdon corroborate this in a research study published in *Animal Behavior*. Moreover, these communiqués

are vital to his outlook on the world, which Dr. Lisberg compares to Facebook. From a single whiff of another dog's urine he "might be able to assess many personal aspects of health, stress, virility, diet" and more. Nonetheless, a lack of leg lifting doesn't necessarily imply disinterest in current events or mean that anything's wrong.

## **Personal Preferences in Peeing Style**

Research has shown that regardless of sex, even when spayed or neutered, dogs sometimes choose to pop a squat or hoist a leg when it's time to do business; a lot depends on how they were raised. If your boy doesn't lift to pee, according to the ASPCA, he might not have had a male dog to mimic at the point in his physiological development when he would have been impressionable to the behavior, usually around 8 to 12 months. Or if he's kept in the backyard without contact with anyone but you, he might not feel the need.

## **When Squatting Should Be Taken Seriously**

"I wouldn't worry unless it's a change," says veterinary behaviorist Dr. Karen Sueda of the West Los Angeles Animal Hospital. An abrupt manifestation of squatting behavior could be a symptom of an underlying medical condition, like arthritis or a more serious orthopedic condition, even hormonal or neurologic issues. Sudden squatting might also simply indicate urinary incontinence, Dr. Sueda adds, common in older dogs. "The dog may not realize that he is urinating and only squats in reaction to a stream of urine coming out." Take your boy for a physical exam and a blood workup. The problem, if any, will be quickly identified.

## **Business as Usual**

Just like you, Rex has personal preferences, many of which he's carried with him since puppyhood. Unfortunately, you can't discuss this stuff with Rex, even under hypnosis. If his squat-and-go approach to relieving himself truly bothers you, trust your instincts and make a vet visit next on the to-do list. If there's no health condition behind it, however, don't sweat it. After all, it's his business.

## **About the Author**

Christopher Lapinel blogs for the Johnson Attorney's Group. He also writes his own blog at [bluestonewriter.com](http://bluestonewriter.com). Lapinel holds an MLitt in creative writing from the University of St. Andrews and taught English composition at LaGuardia Community College.