

Learning About Dog Humping Or Mounting

DEB HAINES · TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 2020 ·

Why Do Dogs Hump?

Humping, or mounting, is a sexual position for dogs, but veterinarians who specialize in canine behavior say it often is done for other reasons as well.

David S. Spiegel, VMD, who has a behavioral veterinary practice near Swarthmore, Pa., says in unneutered and unspayed dogs under a year old, humping is usually sexual in nature. But in older dogs it can be a sign of dominance, a reaction to something that has excited the dog, like visitors arriving, or a sign that a dog hasn't been socialized correctly and doesn't know appropriate canine behavior.

"The topic draws giggles and laughs, but it's a very real topic for some people," Spiegel says. "Some dogs can become very compulsive about the behavior."

Gary Landsberg, DVM, a veterinary behaviorist in Ontario, Canada, says mounting is common play behavior in puppies, and is even normal in the play of older dogs if it's not taken to extremes. "You'll often see one dog mount another, then a few minutes later they'll switch off and the other dog will mount the first dog," Landsberg says. "It's a common play gesture."

It's done by males and females, even by dogs that have been neutered or spayed, he says. "It's a play behavior that dogs do because no one has told them it's not acceptable," Landsberg said. "It can become enjoyable or a normal part of the dog's day, so it keeps doing it. It's the same as jumping up or barking at the door."

Can Dogs Be Trained to Stop Humping?

Veterinarians say it's easiest to stop the behavior when it first starts. Spiegel says people often think humping is cute in puppies, so they don't stop it, or even encourage it by laughing or giving the dog attention.

"If you see a behavior you don't want to see all the dog's life, then you need to stop it when you first see it," Spiegel says. "So if the puppy is humping, distract them when they do it and then give them something else to do. That's very important. You have to give them an alternative behavior. Give them a different toy. Play with them in an appropriate way."

Neutering a male dog usually will decrease mounting problems, the veterinarians say. But in older dogs, where it has become an ingrained habit, other measures will probably be needed. Spiegel recommends obedience training, which can make dogs calmer in situations like when visitors are at the door, or a trip to the dog park. "Humping can be related to heightened excitement levels, so training can take the excitement level down," Spiegel says.

Mounting also is a common dominance gesture with dogs, although it doesn't mean the dog that is doing the humping is dominant. In fact, dogs that are unsure of their place in the pack are more likely to hump to see how many dogs will accept the behavior, a move that can lead to fights with other dogs.

When trying to figure out how to stop the behavior, Landsberg says owners must first figure out what is causing the behavior by watching to see when it usually happens. Then give the dog an acceptable alternative behavior in those situations.

When Your Dog Just Won't Stop Humping !! Not always a behavior problem!

Please consult with your veterinarian ,Urinary tract infections, skin allergies, and priapism (persistent erection) may elicit humping, as well as other behaviors, such as licking the genital area or rubbing against furniture or other objects. Your vet should be able to rule out health conditions as possible reasons for humping.

Breaking the Humping Cycle

Some types of humping are easier to deal with than others, the experts say. When a dog is humping a person, the person should just get up and walk away, which teaches the dog that this is an unacceptable behavior. When they mount other dogs, owners should separate them, and keep the dogs apart when they can't be supervised.

When dogs hump objects, such as pillows or toys, it can be a very difficult habit to break, Spiegel says. In those cases, he recommends keeping the dogs on a strict schedule, which lessens anxiety, and giving them lots of exercise, so they are too tired to get into trouble.

There also are medications that can help dogs with obsessive/compulsive tendencies, he says.

And if all else fails, let the dog have its favorite pillow or toy once or twice a day, in private, he says. "Some dogs are just more sexually driven," Spiegel says. "But in our culture it's not acceptable to let your dog hump other dogs or people. It's rude."

Why Do Female Dogs Hump?

One of the biggest misconceptions about dog behavior is that female dogs don't try to hump people, other dogs, or things. However, humping is normal for both male *and* female dogs. In fact, female dogs can be just as hump-happy as male dogs.

But there's a time and a place for dog humping, and it's usually not when visitors arrive at your home or when you're meeting new dogs. Fortunately, dogs can learn to behave in most situations unless there's a medical or significant behavioral problem.

Underlying Causes of Female Dog Humping

“Both male and female dogs mount other dogs, people, and objects. Most people don’t realize that this behavior isn’t limited to intact male dogs,” said Dr. Pamela Reid, a Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist and Vice President of the American Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals’ (ASPCA) Anti-Cruelty Behavior Team and the Anti-Cruelty Behavioral Rehabilitation Center. Dogs—both male and female—hump for a variety of reasons:

Sexual Behavior

As you might expect, humping is often a sexual behavior. Sexually motivated humping may be accompanied by “flirtatious” body language, such as a raised tail, pawing, and play bows, notes Dr. Reid. Humping is actually part of dogs’ play behavior. She points out, however, that “some poorly socialized or undersocialized dogs excessively mount other dogs in response to play solicitation. They don’t understand how to play well and get overaroused during play.”

Stress or Excitement

For some dogs, humping is the most natural response to a tense or exciting situation. When meeting a new dog or new person for the first time stirs a dog up, his or her go-to outlet is to mount the new dog or person, or a nearby piece of furniture, says Dr. Reid.

Social Dominance

Let’s face it, from a dog’s perspective, whether the dog is male or female, humping another dog or person is a pretty good way of trying to establish dominance. There’s also a theory that such dominant behavior occurs in some female dogs because of pre-natal masculinization, says Peter Borchelt, PhD, a certified applied animal behaviorist.

Pre-natal masculinization occurs in mammals that give birth to multiple offspring where the males outnumber the females in the litter and a hormonal transfer occurs

during prenatal development, he explains. But there's no way to know if pre-natal masculinization has occurred unless the dog's breeding history is known, Dr. Borchelt adds.

Compulsive Behavior Disorders

Humping can become a compulsive behavior, particularly if it's in response to stressful situations, says Dr. Reid. Like other compulsive behaviors, compulsive mounting can interfere with a dog's normal functioning.

Attention Seeking

Some dogs will mount people, dogs, or objects to get attention, particularly if they don't get adequate amounts of exercise and affection at other parts of the day. From a dog's point of view, negative attention (like being told "no") is better than no attention at all.

Health Problems

It's important to note that medical issues also can cause dogs of both sexes to hump, so a trip to the veterinarian may be in order to rule these issues out. The ASPCA lists medical problems that include urinary tract infections, incontinence, priapism, and skin allergies. These medical issues may also cause a dog to lick the affected areas.

Behavior Modification for dog Humping

Humping or mounting behavior is usually normal for a dog. But it can be annoying, embarrassing, and potentially dangerous when your dog tries to hump a visitor or someone else's dog. A large dog that humps can even injure a small dog or child, Borchelt points out. So being able to stop a dog from humping in certain situations has its advantages. The following are ways that can help stop a dog—male or female—from humping:

Spay or Neuter

Spaying an intact female dog may reduce her desire to hump other dogs, particularly if she only does it when she's in heat or around other female dogs in heat, says Dr.

Reid. Neutering intact male dogs may or may not effectively stop humping behavior, but it will reduce the behavior if it's being triggered by a female dog, the agency says.

Distract When You See Warning Signs

Get to know your dog's signals. A dog may be getting ready to mount someone or something when he or she moves in close and starts panting, whining, or pawing the person, dog, or object. The ASPCA recommends distracting the dog with a toy or by asking the dog to perform a basic obedience skill like sitting, lying down, or shaking paws.

Discourage the Behavior

Teach your dog a command to leave other dogs, people, or objects alone. As soon as your dog tries to mount someone or something, command him or her to "Leave it!" and reward your dog with a treat if he or she obeys, says Dr. Reid. If your dog doesn't obey, remove him or her from the situation entirely.

Ignore the Behavior

If your dog is humping to get attention, the best remedy is to prevent the behavior whenever possible (e.g., keep your dog in a crate when visitors arrive) and ignore it when it does happen. Make sure you give your dog plenty of attention and exercise at other times of the day, however.

Consult an Animal Behaviorist

In cases where the dog humping is compulsive or aggressive behavior, seek help from a qualified professional. Aggressive humping may be linked to other attention-seeking or aggressive behaviors.