



## Humping (The embarrassing issue !)

Many dog owners will be familiar with the awkward scenario of their dog unexpectedly humping another dog, an inanimate object, or even a human leg. So why do dogs hump and should we do anything about it? some common questions and answers on the subject

### Is it sexually motivated?

Sometimes, but, depending on the age and gender of your dog, humping, is most commonly an exploratory behaviour. It's governed primarily by initial excitement and touch in certain places that create arousal. Essentially, it's a pleasurable activity for an excited dog, and it can become an embedded response in certain situations: while some dogs may run and grab a toy or slipper when you come home, others might go and mount their bed.

### Why do my dogs tend to hump more when visitors come round?

It's not sexual, dogs just get excited at any that changes from the norm. When visitors come, life is fun and exciting and they hump as an alternative behaviour, transferring their feelings about the event to something else.

It may also have something to do with your responses and those of the visitors: if a dog's excitement is stoked by all the attention and fuss that could be a reason to continue with the behaviour that incited the reaction.

### My dog is neutered. Why does he still hump?

In purely biological terms, entire male dogs want to mate bitches in season, that's it. There are, of course, exceptions, such as when they get a scent that they like on someone or something. But the impulse is largely reserved for when they get that unmistakable, innate mating message via scent.

Neutering helps to decrease the amount of testosterone (a sex hormone) in a dog's body, lessening the urge to mate, and therefore to hump. However, a certain amount of the hormone remains in the dog's bloodstream, meaning they'll continue to want to mate and, by extension, will continue to exhibit mounting behaviour.

Remember, humping is learned and practised from a puppy (before sexual maturity). It's a way for dogs to test out their physical abilities and social potential, more dominant members of the litter will assert themselves by mounting their siblings, thereby displaying leadership or dominance.

### Why do female dogs hump?

It's common for female dogs to hump too, particularly when a puppy (although not usually as much as males do). The reason is simple: it feels pleasurable to them and is simply a natural behaviour, motivated by play and social interaction in the same way as it is for male dogs. Some dogs (of either gender) might hump in response to stress as well as excitement, so it's useful to watch your dog's humping habits to see if something in particular is agitating him or her.

### What should I do about the humping?

Probably nothing. Dogs seem to enjoy the interaction, so why not allow it to continue. If it includes humans, I would put a stop to it, but if you have a puppy who's humping his bed or a toy, you should probably just leave him alone to get on with what is a natural, normal canine behaviour.

However, humping can sometimes have an underlying medical cause, such as a urinary tract infection or skin allergy, so if the behaviour has come on suddenly or seems excessive, it's worth asking your vet about it particularly if your dog is also spending a lot of time licking his or her genital area.

If you've ruled out a medical reason and are still concerned that the humping is getting out of hand or happens too frequently, you should use positive reinforcement training to stop the habit and teach an alternative response. A qualified behaviourist can help you to assess the situation and take the best course of action.