



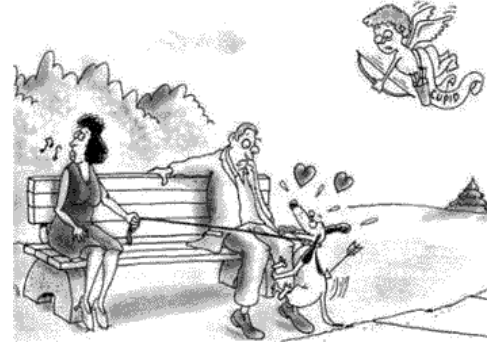
Stop My Dog from Mounting!!!

By Jill Miller

The image of a dog mounting an object, another dog, or a human is a part of many off-color comedian routines, cartoons, and TV sit-coms.

However, it's a real situation that most dog owners encounter, and it is embarrassing. Fortunately, it is possible to reduce or eliminate the occurrence of this awkward behavior.

The first thing to understand with dog mounting behavior is that it is not usually a sexual act. Both male and female dogs mount, even if they have been spayed or neutered. In most situations mounting is a symptom of dominance or insecurity. Regardless of why the behavior is happening, it is generally inappropriate and rude.



The one time when mounting may not be considered inappropriate is if the resident dog is laying ground rules for a new dog in the home. However, this should have to occur only once or twice to establish the new pack order. If it happens more than that, or the mounting triggers a disagreement, then the human, as pack leader, needs to intervene.

No matter why a dog is mounting, it is important to redirect the dog to another behavior, preferably one that makes it impossible to mount at the same time. The first thing to do is to attempt to startle the dog by clapping your hands, giving a piercing whistle, or a quick shout of "hey!". If you can get the dog's attention and call him to you, that is ideal. However, it is often necessary to go over and separate the dog from whatever has his attention. Once the dog is focused on you, give him a command. Giving a command as simple as "sit" or "down" can be enough to distract the dog, especially if the dog has not developed a mounting habit. Dogs that are frequent mounters often give signs that they are about to jump up on someone or something. Once you figure out these signs, your goal should be to stop the dog before he has a chance to mount at all. This behavior is self-rewarding and no amount of punishment will take that away. Therefore, stopping the mounting before it starts can help diminish the behavior more quickly.

If the dog is really riled up and continues to try mounting, it may be necessary to give him a time out. Closing the dog in a crate, separate room, tethering him, or putting him on a long down-stay are all appropriate time outs. The idea is to take the dog out of the situation to give him a chance to calm down. This works whether the dog is stressed out or showing dominance. (My personal guideline for letting a dog resume play is once his pupils are no longer dilated and he can follow simple commands. Other things factor in, but those are the first two things I look for.)

Dogs that continually mount other dogs are a fight waiting to happen. Eventually he will jump on the wrong dog, who will in turn do what he can to prevent your dog from

ever mounting him again. Dogs that mount are not being macho, "sowing their oats", or being cool. They are being rude and stand a good chance of getting hurt. Nipping this behavior in the bud is very important. In addition to taking the dog out of the situation, it may also be necessary to reinforce the fact that you are in charge, not him. I personally do not advocate pushing my alpha position on my dogs often, but this is one time when I will.

I do not believe in alpha rolls. Contrary to popular belief, the alpha wolf does not use these on a regular basis to keep the rest of the pack in line. Alpha rolls are a challenge and if your dog decides to meet your challenge, you risk getting bit. However, you can put your dog into a down and loom over him for a few moments without ever touching him. Then deliberately turn yourself away from the dog and refuse to make eye contact for a significant amount of time. The dog is still being supervised, but he is not allowed to engage in any activity with you. The human is in charge and the human decides when, where, and how interactions will take place. This type of correction is seen far more often in packs of both wild and domestic canines. This is not something that should be used often or with most dogs, just dogs that are very pushy or are in danger of being hurt by another dog.

Dogs that mount objects (and sometimes people) are generally doing so to get attention or because they are stressed. Doing any sort of firm correction or alpha-reinforcing behavior may make it worse. Startling the dog and giving him an alternate command is still appropriate, but also think about why the dog may be seeking attention or getting stressed.

What has changed around the house, no matter how minor it may seem? If you have been busy with home projects, working more, have guests, experiencing family problems, etc., those may be things that the dog is picking up on and acting out on. It may be necessary to adjust your schedule to spend more time with your dog. Perhaps an extra five minutes on a walk, a fun training session, or some cuddle time before bed would be enough to reassure the dog. If that is not possible, ask a neighbor or friend to stop by to take the dog for a quick walk or for some extra attention.



Object mounting can also be reduced by managing the situation. If there is one certain pillow, blanket, piece of furniture, etc. that seems to be the target of your dog's attention, remove it or make it unavailable for a while. If it seems to happen at a specific time (one of my dogs was into mounting his bed every day between 7:00 and 7:30), try to make a note of it and make sure the dog is doing something else at that time. Stopping the dog before he starts is very helpful in reducing the behavior.

One last thing to note is that sometimes the mounting behavior is part of an age-related phase, generally more common in adolescence than as the dog matures. While you should work to modify the behavior, rest assured that in some dogs it seems to go away after a few months.