

Separation Anxiety

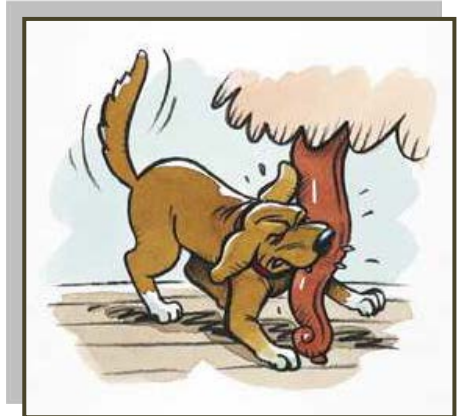
1) Ask your dog to sit before every interaction with him. The dog must sit before getting petted, before eating, before playing with you, before going outside etc. He can be given a treat when he sits.

2) If possible, exercise your dog for a few minutes before you leave (for example letting him run out in the yard). Afterwards offer him a long lasting treat (for example a stuffed KONG or rawhide) about 10 minutes before leaving.

3) Completely ignore your dog about 10-15 minutes before leaving. Don't look at him, don't pet him and don't talk to him. Keep calm when you leave, as if you were just walking into another room in the house.

4) When you arrive, ignore your dog completely for 10-15 minutes or until he calms down. Don't look at him, don't pet him and don't talk to him. Once he is calm you can ask him to sit and then give him some attention.

5) Desensitisation program: Try to identify what triggers your dog's anxiety (ex: when you take your keys, when you put on a jacket, when you pick up your briefcase). The most common signs of anxiety are panting, dilated pupils, pacing, excessive yawning etc. Once you have identified the trigger or triggers, you can use these to desensitise the dog. For example if you dog becomes anxious when you pick up your keys , pick up your keys and then go sit down to watch TV or pick up your keys and go to the bathroom. Do this about 4 times a day until the dog no longer acts anxious when you pick up your keys. He will no longer associate you picking up your keys to you leaving.



6) You can also start to practice very short departures. Using a bell or another sound you're your dog doesn't know, ring the bell before you leave for a short period of time. Go outside for one minute and then come back inside. Do this about twice a day for a few days. Afterwards ring the bell and the leave for 2 min intervals. Repeat this about twice a day for a few days. Double the time you leave every few days (For example, leave for 4 minutes, then 8 minutes, then 16 minutes, etc.). Ring the bell every time you do this. While you are doing the

exercises never ring the bell when you are leaving for long periods of time. With time your dog should no longer be anxious when you ring the bell before you leave because he associates it with very short departures. Continue the exercises until you can leave 30 minutes after ringing the bell without your dog getting anxious. At this point you can start ringing the bell even when you are leaving for a long time. This will trick your dog into thinking he has nothing to worry about because you're only leaving for a short time period.

7) You can also try to vary your routine when you leave. For example, exit



through a different door; bring a school bag instead of a briefcase etc. Some dogs are less anxious when there is no predictable routine when you leave.

8) There are many different natural supplements that can be used to try and reduce the animal's anxiety. These supplements are often used in

conjunction with the desensitisation program. Examples include: Adaptil, Zylkène, Bio-calm and Royal Canin Calm food.

9) Medication can be very helpful for the treatment of separation anxiety. It helps reduce the anxiety level of the dog so that he can better assimilate the exercises above and learn to be comfortable when the owner isn't home. Often the dog will respond to the exercises much quicker when medication is used to help. It is important to never stop this type of medication suddenly. The medication is usually given for a minimum of 3 months or until the dog has no anxious episodes for one month when left alone. We can try weaning him off the medication at this point if you wish. Some dogs will require medication in the long term.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us at the number below or contact Dr. Vicky Sedgwick by e-mail at vicky.sedgwick@hvovet.com.

☛ **Consult our website for more information on canine and feline behavior.**

GOOD LUCK !

