

SEPARATION ANXIETY

Separation anxiety is panic response dogs exhibit when they are left alone. Common behaviors of separation anxiety are digging and scratching at doors in an attempt to reunite with owner, destructive chewing, howling, barking, whining, or urination and defecation (even with otherwise house-trained dogs).

How to treat separation anxiety

- Do not make arrivals a big deal. Ignore your dog for the first few minutes, and then calmly start petting him/her
- Leave behind an article of clothing, preferably something unwashed that smells like you
- Establish a safety cue that is one word or action which you will use every time you leave to reassure your dog you'll be back
- Consider using an over-the-counter calming product that may reduce fearfulness in dogs

How to handle a more severe problem

- Confine loosely, rather than strictly. A small room with a window and distractions rather than a crate
- Provide busy toys
- Have unwashed laundry to lend a calming effect

What **NOT** to do

- **Punishment**-The destruction and house soiling that often occur aren't your dog's revenge for being alone; they are part of a panic response
- **Another dog**-Separation anxiety comes from not being with YOU
- **Crating**- Dogs with true separation anxiety will still engage in anxiety responses. He/she may urinate, defecate, howl, or injure themselves in an attempt to escape
- **Radio/TV noise**-Leaving the radio or television won't help (unless the radio or TV is a safety cue)
- **Obedience training**- While always a good idea, separation anxiety is not a result of disobedience or lack of training, therefore it will not help with this issue

What to do in the meantime

- Ask your vet about drug therapy. Anti-anxiety drugs can be prescribed to reduce your dog's anxiety levels
- Take your dog to doggie daycare
- Leave your dog with a friend or family member
- Take your dog to work with you, if possible 😊