



# SAN TAN CANINE TRAINING NEWSLETTER

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## Anxiety Disorder in Dogs

Surprisingly, anxiety disorder associated with separation is very common in our canine friends. This is when the dog experiences severe anxiety or panic when left alone or separated from its owners. For example, if you leave the house and are gone all day, your dog will become extremely nervous and it may intensify as the day progresses. Because dogs need to be around humans and other dogs in order to be happy, they can easily succumb to panic and fright when they are left to themselves. There are, of course, different degrees of this separation anxiety.

There are some types of dog that have a higher risk of this kind of disorder and you should most definitely research this before deciding on a particular type of dog. Think about your lifestyle and whether or not you are gone for long periods of time before purchasing Springer Spaniels, German Shepherds or any other dog that is prone to anxiety disorders. Think about it before purchasing a dog from an animal shelter as well. Because many shelter dogs have either had trauma in their lives or have been abandoned, they are less trusting and may develop serious anxiety disorders.

You also want to find out when the dogs were taken from their mothers. This is because many people take them away too soon (especially the dogs that you find in pet stores) and this will increase the chances of anxiety. Many of these animals are stuck into a cage or display area without much attention and they can stay there for weeks and months by themselves. This is traumatic for animals and these dogs may also have a greater risk of developing anxiety disorders.

Another thing that is very important is the amount of time you spend with your dog. If you think that you're going to be gone more than you will be home, you may want to reconsider getting a dog unless someone will be there to play with the dog and give him or her attention. Without these things, your dog will not be happy and well adjusted. If you think your dog may be experiencing some anxiety problems, look for some of these common signs:

- Your dog may recognize when you're leaving simply by observing your habits. The dog may see you putting on your shoes, getting your coat on, getting your keys, etc. Watch for your dog to act strangely at this time. Do they jump on you or try to keep you there?

- When you are gone, your dog will become worse and may bark or scratch at the doors and windows. This is your dog's attempt to find you. They may tear up items in the house or chew things. They may use the 'bathroom' inside of your home, and they can even lick or chew their skin until they have wounds.
- Your dog may even display some sort of obsessive behaviors in order to deal with the anxiety – such as spinning or chasing his or her tail.

You may notice that when you get back, your dog is excited to the point of frenzy! The dog might jump on you and lick you or use other signs of being glad that you're home. A happy dog will do this for around a minute, but dogs with anxiety may do this for longer periods of time. If this happens, do not encourage your dog to become more excited and don't pay too much attention to them. This will help alleviate some of the anxiety. Simply give the dog a pat and a few words and go about your business.

**Here are some other things you can do to help reduce your dog's anxiety.**

### GIVE YOUR DOG PLENTY OF EXERCISE

In fact, it's better if you give your dog a ton of exercise right before you leave. This way, he or she will be very tired and won't be as likely to have a lot of nervous energy. Try a half an hour walk before you leave in order to keep your dog's anxiety down. In fact, the longer you walk him or her, the better it will be.

### BEFORE LEAVING, GIVE YOUR DOG SOMETHING GREAT TO CHEW ON

Purchase a bone or something else that he or she will be satisfied with while you're gone. In fact, giving it to your dog right before you leave may distract him or her and keep the anxiety down on that level as well. Also, before you leave, if possible, place your television or radio on so that your dog can feel as if he or she is not alone. If you can leave a window accessible for him or her to look out, that's even better.



## **PRACTICE GETTING READY TO LEAVE BY PLACING YOUR COAT OR SHOES ON AND THEN REACHING FOR THE DOOR – OF COURSE, DON'T LEAVE**

You only want your dog to see that you are getting ready to leave. Sit back down and then do it again a few moments later. Continue until your dog does not become excited at your leaving. You may want to give the dog a treat and praise him or her. Working at this gradually will help rid your dog of his or her fears.

Don't comfort your dog too much when he or she is upset. While this sounds heartless, doing so will actually make the situation worse. It will actually make your dog think that there is a valid reason for his or her feelings and you don't want that. Instead, try to minimize your dog's need for concern by ignoring him or her.

## **10 TIPS TO CURE DOG SEPARATION ANXIETY**

You love your dog, but coming home after a long day of work can be very stressful if your dog suffers from separation anxiety. This seems like an overwhelming problem with no end in sight, but your dog's separation anxiety can be relieved. Here are 10 tips that will help cure your dog's separation anxiety.

1. If your dog is not crate trained, now is the time to start training your dog. Crate training can provide your dog with the positive reinforcement he needs in order to cope with his separation anxiety.
2. Many dogs have an extremely difficult time when their owner leaves for work in the morning. In order to leave the house quickly, it is a good idea to distract your dog as you are leaving the house. By doing this, your dog will not realize you are leaving.
3. Talk to your veterinarian in order to receive a diagnosis of separation anxiety. It is best to rule out other conditions in order to properly treat your dog.
4. Offer lots of praise when your dog engages in positive behaviors. This will help boost your dog's self-esteem and will help to reduce some of the negative behaviors associated with separation anxiety.
5. Do not make a big deal about leaving your home. Make a quick exit so that you will not stress out your dog.
6. Do not give dog free reign over the house while you are away. A big, empty house can be overwhelming for a dog that is suffering from separation anxiety. Instead, limit your dog to a smaller space that is appropriate, given the size of your dog.
7. If your dog suffers from extreme separation anxiety, you may want to work from home for a few days. During this time, you can leave the house for short periods of time and then return, gradually working up to a several hour stretch. This teaches your dog that if you leave the house, you will return, thus easing their anxiety.
8. There are several holistic treatments available for dogs that have separation anxiety. You may want to discuss these treatments with your vet. However, you should be cautious and not leave your dog unattended the first few times you give the dog the treatment, should a problem or complication arise.
9. Make sure your dog has plenty of food and water to last throughout the day. Many owners make the mistake of leaving just enough for the day, which can panic a dog. Make sure your dog sees your leaving the fresh food and water in the morning before you leave.
10. It is also a good idea to leave your dog with a piece of clothing that smells like you, like a t-shirt. Dogs have a very good sense of smell and your scent will comfort them when they feel lonely.

If you and your dog are suffering the effects of separation anxiety, know that it can be solved through consistency and a little hard work on your part. In a few weeks, your dog should be fine when you leave for work.



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