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SEPARATION ANXIETY

Signs of Separation Anxiety:

Dogs with separation anxiety may be destructive, vocalize, inappropriately eliminate, or have excessive drooling and panting only when left alone and is often near windows and doors.

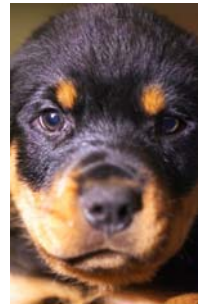
Control of Separation Anxiety:

The use of training, behavior modification and in some cases medications can help reduce separation anxiety.

Expectations of Treatment:

The goal of treatment is to reduce anxiety exhibited when your dog is left alone. You may never have complete control of the anxiety. Treatment of the condition is a very time consuming process which will take weeks to months to address.

It is a condition that requires consistency and cooperation of all members in the household.



Decrease Response to Departure Cues:

Departure cues are signs that indicate you are leaving such as picking up keys or walking to the door. The goal is to decrease sensitivity to these cues by demonstrating them with out leaving. The first thing you must do is determine what cues trigger your dog's anxiety. Once you know what the cues are perform them with out leaving 2-4 times a day until no signs of anxiety are shown.

Decrease Reaction to Departure:

First teach your dog to sit in view of the door. Gradually increase distance between you and the dog before returning. Reward them with praise if they stay until your return. Slowly increase the time that you are away before finally adding elements of leaving such as opening the door.

Distraction Techniques:

Leave your dog treats that they like or toys filled with treats such as a Kong with peanut butter. This will associate something good with you leaving. For best results use these treats only for the times when you are gone.

Departure and Return Procedure:

Ignore your dog 15-30 minutes before leaving and upon return. On return only give them attention when they are calm and quiet. However do allow them outside to eliminate.

Independence Training:

Teach your dog to have more independence from you. All attention should be at your initiation. You begin and end all attention sessions. No attention should be given on the dogs demand.

Attention is earned by performing a task such as sit. Decrease your dog's following behavior by teaching them to stay in other rooms instead of with you.

Planned Departures:

Begin planned departures when your dog is comfortable with departure cues. The key is to have departures short enough not to elicit separation anxiety. Departures must be exactly like real departures including leaving in the car. You should leave a safety cue such as leaving a radio or TV on only when doing training to help your dog differentiate between the short departure training and leaving for work, school, etc. Start by leaving for at first a few seconds and increase by 1-5 minutes each time if no signs of distress are evident. If destruction, vocalization or elimination occurs the departure time was too long. Audio tapes can be used to monitor for vocalization while you are gone. If planned departures are continued even though distress is seen the condition will get worse. If your dog can be left for 2-3 hours they can usually be left all day. The safety cue can then be slowly phased out or used indefinitely.

