

## ANXIETY

Anxiety may be a well known problem among those of us with two legs, but it can also affect our four legged friends as well. Dogs and cats can suffer from many different kinds of anxiety from noise anxiety, separation anxiety and even social anxiety. The first step in helping your pet overcome their anxiety is to first recognize that they are suffering from anxiety. Signs of anxiety in dogs can include:

- panting
- excessive drooling
- whining
- barking
- trembling
- destructive chewing

Signs of anxiety in cats are not as obvious as they are in dogs but they can include:

- inappropriate urination or defecation (outside of the litter box)
- hiding (more than what is normal for your cat)
- compulsive grooming to the point of baldness in certain areas
- increased dependency on owners

Once you are aware that your pet might be suffering from anxiety the next step is how to help them overcome and deal with their anxiety.

### Helping Your Pet Deal with Their Anxiety

Depending on what type of anxiety your pet is suffering from can change the way you help them overcome it. Separation anxiety would not be treated with the same techniques as social anxiety. Some anxieties can be managed with a change in diet or with the addition of medication. Depending on the severity of the anxiety it is best to try some at home techniques before jumping into medicinal remedies. If you have any questions about anxiety do not hesitate to contact the clinic and we will be able to help you further.

#### Separation Anxiety

For cases of mild separation anxiety, try distracting your dog with a puzzle toy that will take them about 30 minutes to figure out. Rubber toys that can have food stuffed into them are a tasty distraction to keep your pet occupied for short periods of time.

For more severe anxiety requires more lengthy conditioning. In these sessions it is important to start with short manageable sessions that will not induce a large stress response from your pet. Slowly over a long period of time, increase the amount of time that you leave your pet alone for until they are more comfortable. Try leaving clothes with your pet that smell like you to help alleviate stress and loneliness.

For more detailed information check out this link to the ASPCA:

<https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/dog-care/common-dog-behavior-issues/separation-anxiety>

### Noise Anxiety

Noise anxiety can include anything from fireworks to thunderstorms. These anxieties can worsen until even the sounds of pots and pans clanging together can frighten them. It is important to remember that during times of anxiety, try not to unintentionally reward your pet's anxiety. By saying, "It's okay" your dog often associates 'okay' with acceptable behaviour and may now think that their anxious behaviour is valid. It is best to take your dog to a designated safe area, somewhere quiet and dark where they feel safe. This could be a bathroom or a small quiet den area. Often turning on a t.v. or radio can help to gently drown out the outside noise.

<https://www.lovethatpet.com/dogs/training-and-behaviour/dog-noise-phobias/>

### Social Anxiety

Social anxiety occurs most often when pets are not properly socialized at a young age (between 6-12 weeks in the ideal time to socialize). This can cause them to become aggressive when other pets or strange people approach them. Remember to go slow when helping your pet overcome their fear. Introduce one pet or person at a time and allow your pet to make the first move. Reward good behaviour by using verbal praise or treats. Good behaviour may be as simple as not barking when a stranger enters the room.