**Separation Anxiety in Rescue Dog’s**

It is recognised that rescue dogs suffer from separation anxiety a lot more than dogs who have been with their owners since puppyhood. Since a lot of the dogs, we treat are rescues, or abandoned we know a thing or two about minimizing rescue dogs’ separation anxiety. If your dog is a recent rescue or you’ve had the rescue dog for a while, and your dog is struggling to cope when left alone, you should find the information very helpful. Read on for solutions to alleviate your rescue dog’s separation anxiety.

**The first thing we need to find out what is Canine Separation Anxiety.**

First things first, let’s get the term straight. The Kennel Club describes it as “when your dog exhibits extreme stress from the time you leave them alone until you return.” Their level of distress can range from mild to severe, and it can manifest in a variety of behaviours.

**So, what are some of the Signs Your Rescue Dog Might Have Separation Anxiety**. Both owners and dogs make mistakes from time to time, that is just nature. But in saying that, if your rescue dog consistently shows these symptoms when left home alone, they might have separation anxiety.

1. **Destructive chewing on your belongings**
2. **Howling, barking, and whining**
3. **Excessive panting or drooling**
4. **Having accidents in the house**
5. **Digging and scratching at exits such as doors and windows.**
6. **Pacing before you leave, while you’re gone and when you arrive home.**

However, if your dog only exhibits, a few of these symptoms, they could be suffering from separation anxiety. What we don’t want to do is mistake boredom or lack of obedience for separation anxiety. If your dog shows some of the above in your home while you’re gone but acts relaxed when you leave the house and upon your return. It could be you dog just needs more training.

**There are many reasons rescue dogs Experience Separation Anxiety**

Dogs who have been passed from one owner to another, who did not grow up with their current family, will often come with unwanted baggage. That said it does not make them bad dogs. It simply means they need extra care to overcome their confusion or trauma. Here are reasons a rescue dog might suffer from Separation anxiety.

**They were uprooted from their home.**

We all know dogs are man’s best friend. But when that best friend leaves them in a rescue centre, as dogs are pack animals that bond with humans, that bond they had with us is broken. Many dogs have a very hard time recovering. In some cases, there owner became ill, or worse passed away, dogs are very sensitive to our emotions and patterns, but illness is something the dog reacts to. Should the owner pass away the dog is not only put into a rescue kennel but suffering from grief as well. No matter the reason, if your dog was dropped off at a shelter, abandoned. This could definitely cause separation anxiety.

**Another reason, there not used to being alone.**

If your dog has spent most of their life in a shelter, they are accustomed to being around other dogs and humans, in some cases 24 hours a day. Solitude might be foreign and scary to them.

**They might have a history of separation anxiety.**

Your adopted dog might have been a victim of separation anxiety long before they came into your home. Some dogs are surrendered to shelters because of their separation anxiety. Each year, countless dogs with separation anxiety are surrendered to shelters because dog owners don’t have the time, the funds, patience, or resources to help. When these dogs are surrendered in most cases it’s not told to the rescue organisations the reason and is just passed on to the new dog owners who ultimately face the same problems. With every failed adoption, separation anxiety just gets worse. It’s extremely beneficial, when shelters are aware of a dog’s separation anxiety. So, they can let potential pet owners know of the dog’s struggles. The owners can take steps to help stop the cycle of adopting and surrendering. Separation anxiety shouldn’t be a deal breaker in a rescue dog, but it requires commitment from the adopter. If you have not yet adopted a shelter dog but are considering adding one to your family, we recommend you take some professional help. Ultimately, it all comes down to change. Dogs are creatures of habit and losing a loved one or a safe space can hit them hard, causing the problematic coping mechanisms to arise.

**Ways to Help Your Rescue Dog Deal with Separation Anxiety.**

Whether your rescue dog’s separation anxiety is mild or severe, it can be minimized or elevated over time. Below are some solutions that might work for your dog. You can try them one at a time or several in combination. It’s worth giving all of them a shot and seeing which are most effective for your pooch.

**Desensitize Your Dog to Their Triggers**

Dogs are highly intelligent and can pick up on cues that you are leaving. They might become upset when they see you pick up your keys, walk out the door, put your coat on and so on. To help minimize separation anxiety, you can take the power away from these triggers and desensitize your dog to them. At random times during the day, you can pick up your keys and jingle them, but don’t leave the house. You can also walk out the door and close it as if you are leaving but come back seconds or moments later. Whatever your dog’s triggers are, perform them randomly without actually leaving your dog for your usual amount of time. This way, your dog will begin to stop associating these acts with you leaving them.

**Increase Your Time Apart**

Even though it’s hard for both of you to be apart, your dog has to learn to be on their own. They can only learn that by being alone. Depending on the severity of your dog’s separation anxiety, you might have to take puppy steps when you first start this separation training. Maybe you can begin by staying in separate rooms for one, two or five minutes. If your dog does well, you can increase the time in small increments. But this you can not rush.

Eventually, you can start leaving your dog alone in the house for five, ten or fifteen minutes, increasing the time if your dog has a positive response. They will begin to realize you’re not leaving them forever.

**Create a Safe Space for Your Dog**

Not all dogs, especially those suffering from separation anxiety can be trusted with free reign of the house. To lessen destruction to your furniture and belongings, you might need to designate one room as your dog’s safe space and make it as cosy as possible. Leave them with a comfy bed and lots of toys, plus food and water. Extra points if the room has a window with a view. It’s also a good idea to leave them with a shirt or towel that has your scent on it, which can help mimic your presence and, therefore, calm your dog., leaving music on cam help with the sound of human voices. While you’re at home, make sure your dog spends time alone in their safe space so they will feel completely comfortable in it when you’re gone.

**Be the Top Dog**. Your dog might be the centre of your world, but, in reality, you still have to be the alpha. Sometimes, you have to show it. Teach your dog the basic commands so that they don’t expect you to constantly be at their beck and call. “Stay” is a good command to start with. Rescue dogs have always wanted a loving home, and you have provided them with what they have been looking for, we know their past life, and have to take this into consideration. Even so the new dog has to know his place in life. Ultimately, being the alpha makes your rescue pooch earn their treats and understand that they are the bottom of the pack, not the pack leader.

**Play it Cool with Your Exits and Entrances**

According to the Kennel CLUB.

*It’s also important to play it cool when you leave or return to your home. You can greet your dog with love, but don’t get over the top emotional. Keep things calm and without fanfare. If you get worked up, your dog will see your comings and goings as a major event to worry over. Plus, if you return home to damage or accidents, looking stern with eyes wide open will punish your dog.* ***But this will only add to their anxiety or worsen the problem.***

Give your dog a nice goodbye and hello but treat every meeting as the alpha of the pack. Keeping your head up and standing tall, move around the house for approximately two minutes. Bending over or looking down greeting your dog might be triggering the anxiety, your rescue dog needs a leader.

**Exercise Your Dog**

Exercise and mental stimulation are critical to reducing anxiety and stress. Be sure your dog receives adequate exercise before you leave. Walking the dog for five minutes each day won’t reduce anxiety, but sniffing and exploring new places, running free for 20 minutes will. Not to mention that exercise also makes your dog sleepy, which can help them rest while you’re away.

**Leave Your Dog with a Tasty, Long-Lasting Treat**

Treats can be a great distraction, especially when dogs have to work to get to them. Puzzle toys, which require time and effort to reach treats, can occupy your dog’s mind in your absence. Here are a few of our favourites.

* Kong toys which are mentally stimulating and offer a playful bounce, can be stuffed with your dog’s favourite treats.
* Treat lick mats can be covered with wet dog food or any dog-friendly spread (like some peanut butters or yogurts), which your dog can lick on for a long period of time. It lasts even longer if you freeze it before serving it to your pooch.
* Snuffle mats keeps your dog busy and calm as they sniff out food, you can hide an entire meal in this snuffle mat to result in a slow feeding.
* **Note**, only give your dog these kinds of toys/treats when you’re leaving the house.

Over time, your dog will begin to associate this special, hard-earned treat with you leaving and this is a good thing. They won’t be sad to see you exit the house, because they will be so excited to enjoy this treat. They might even be the tiniest bit happy to see you go.

**Dog walkers**

 Dog walker can be a great way for dogs with separation anxiety. They can practice their social skills with other dogs and humans, and they can burn some of their anxious energy through exercise. Your dog may not need to be with a walker every single day but going regularly can help them establish a routine and teach them that they can make it just fine without you. Soon enough, they will be positively triggered by the words, dog walker (or the persons name) Prepare for lots of tail-wagging. **Note do your research into walkers, make sure there have adequate insurance and experience with rescue dogs.**

**Use Medication as a Last Resort**

If all else fails, you can visit your vet and see what medication as an option for treating separation anxiety. There are also some good herbal treatments that ease the condition you may require.

**Important Note:** Do not assume drugs will cure your dog’s separation anxiety. Medication is most effective when it’s paired with some of the methods above. No matter which solutions you try out, remember to take it slow. Separation anxiety will not disappear overnight.

**Get a Pet Cam**

Much like a baby monitor, pet cameras allow you to see what your pooch is up to while you’re away. Some cameras even have two-way audio and video, so your dog can see and hear you, dog might find comfort in this virtual communication.

**Visit Your Pet Mid-Day**

If work is what is separating you from your pup, and you work near home, simply spend your lunch break with your dog, It gives you both something to look forward to, and it can help ease your dog into staying home alone all day long.

**Pet Sitter or Dog Boarder or home visits**

If you choose to leave your dog in the care of a pet sitter or dog boarder, you need to know they are professionals. Get references, ask questions and meet them before trusting them with your dog. so, you can check out where your dog will be staying ask questions, see where and with whom your dog will spend their time, it makes you feel much more confident about leaving them. When you leave them get the phone number and ask about giving them a call to elevate your anxiety.

**Your Rescue Dog’s Separation Anxiety Can Become History**

Separation anxiety can be treated and even cured. When your family puts in the work, you can reduce the dog anxiety and elevate the problem.

We wish you luck as you take on the challenging task of minimizing separation anxiety in your rescue dog. The end result will be worth it. Your pet went through so much before their adoption and now deserves the best, happiest and most carefree life passible.

**When your dog is ready for doggie day-care, our sure you will find a day care or walker doors are open. We would like to wish you every success and our doors are always open. Email if you feel you need our help. View our web site.**

**The Happy Dog Training Academy**