



## How to Ease Pet Separation Anxiety

As we transition into fall and the school year gets underway, we want to focus this blog post on a common challenge many pet owners face— separation anxiety. This condition occurs when pets become stressed and may exhibit destructive behaviors when left home alone. With the return of busier schedules, pets may spend more time at home by themselves. This alone time can trigger anxiety, especially in those who are not used to extended periods of separation. In this blog post, we will discuss the signs of separation anxiety and provide tips to help ease your pet's discomfort.

### Signs of Separation Anxiety in Pets

Common signs of separation anxiety in pets include:

- Excessive barking or meowing
- Destructive behavior
- Pacing or restlessness
- Accidents in the house
- Loss of appetite

If your pet shows these signs after being left alone, they may be struggling with separation anxiety. Read on for tips to help reduce their anxiety and make them feel more at ease.

## Preparing Your Pet for the Transition

To help your pet adjust to spending more time alone, gradually ease them into a new routine. Start by practicing short periods of separation—about 5-10 minutes—and slowly increase the time as your pet becomes more comfortable. This approach builds their confidence and reduces the anxiety associated with being left alone. When you return, offer positive reinforcement by rewarding your pet with treats or praise for staying calm. This helps create a positive association with alone time.

It is also beneficial to create a safe space for your pet. This designated area should be a quiet, comfortable spot, like a crate, specific room, or corner with their bed and favorite toys. Fill it with familiar scents and objects that help your pet feel secure and relaxed.

## Strategies to Ease Separation Anxiety

To ease separation anxiety in your pet, try providing interactive toys such as food puzzles, sniff mats, or hide-and-seek toys to keep them mentally stimulated while you are away. Calming aids, such as pheromone diffusers, calming hoods, or ThunderShirts can also help create a more relaxed environment. If your pet struggles with extended periods of alone time, consider options like doggy daycare or hiring a pet sitter. Additionally, leaving comforting items that carry your scent can offer extra reassurance and reduce your pet's stress while you're gone.

## Maintaining a Calm Departure and Return

To help ease separation anxiety, it's important to keep your goodbyes calm. Avoid making a big deal out of saying goodbye by keeping it brief and casual, which can prevent your pet from getting overly worked up every time you leave. Similarly, when you return home, greet your pet calmly without excessive excitement. This helps reinforce the idea that your coming and going is a normal part of the day, reducing anxiety in your pet over time.

## When to Seek Professional Help

If your pet's separation anxiety seems severe or isn't improving with the steps you've tried, it might be time to consult our veterinary team. Persistent issues like destructive behavior, excessive barking or meowing, or even self-harm are signs that your pet's anxiety could require professional intervention. We can help rule out any underlying health problems

that may be contributing to the anxiety. Additionally, we can recommend a trusted animal behaviorist to work with your pet and develop targeted strategies, including getting your pet started on anti-anxiety medication, for managing their anxiety. Don't hesitate to contact us if you need guidance – we're here to support your pet's well-being every step of the way.

As the back-to-school season changes your family's routine, it's natural for pets to feel the shift in their environment. Understanding and addressing separation anxiety can significantly improve your pet's well-being and help them adapt more comfortably to longer periods alone. By gradually acclimating your pet to new alone times, providing engaging toys and a secure space, and maintaining a calm approach to departures and arrivals, you can help ease their anxiety and foster a more peaceful home environment. Remember, every pet is unique, and it may take time and patience to find the right combination of strategies that work for your furry friend. With consistency and love, you can help your pet adjust to the new routine and minimize separation anxiety.