

Separation anxiety

The main cause for separation anxiety is because the dog finds it difficult to reach a relaxed state of mind when the owner is not present. Dogs that suffer from this condition become stressed, upset and anxious when they are separated from their human carer.

Common Symptoms

- **Urinating and Defecating /barking and howling / chewing digging and destruction/ escaping/ generally being unhappy when left alone.**

If these symptoms are only shown when the owner is not present then this is an indication that it is caused by separation anxiety as each one is the dog's way of relieving anxiety and stress.

Dogs chew for a number of reasons, the main one being that it feels good. When dogs chew endorphins are released in the brain, which has a calming effect. Dogs chew to relieve boredom, stress, loneliness, frustration and anxiety. Dogs with excessive energy will often chew to try to release it. If you understand why your dog chews it will be easier to come up with a solution for the problem.



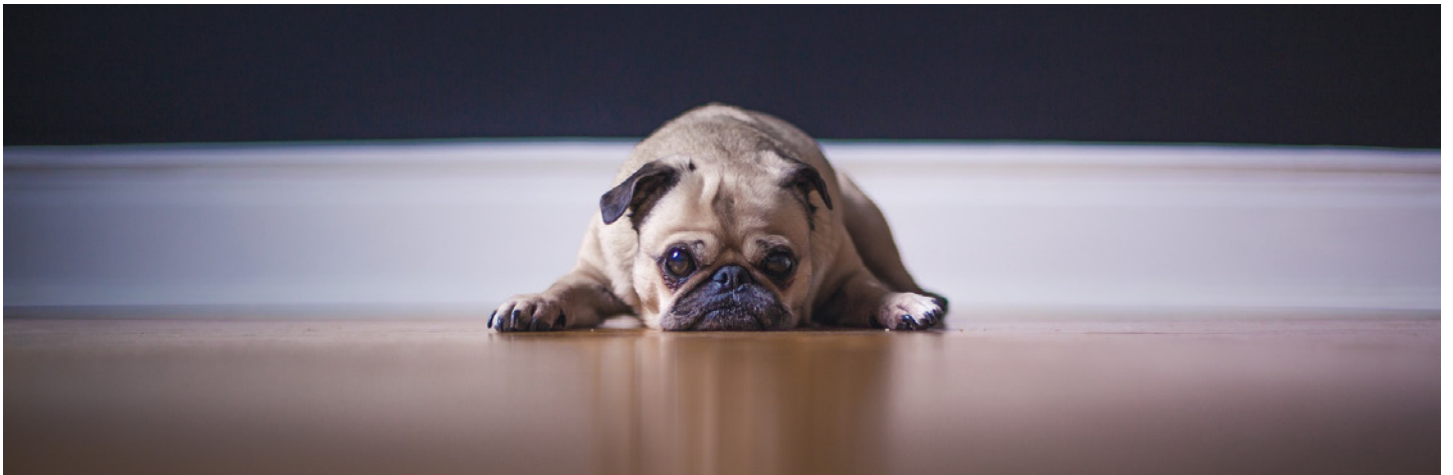
By exercising your dog before leaving it for longer periods of time will get him into a routine of physical exertion and then rest, both vital in avoiding, and treating separation anxiety. Dogs like routine as it makes them feel more secure so get into a routine with walk times as well. Teach your dog from the start that your leaving the house is an ordinary, regular and completely natural event. **Avoid excitable departures and homecomings** (ignore your dog when you leave and return, this is so important in helping a dog with this condition) as this will put the dog into an excitable state and she will then find it more difficult to be calm when you leave.

Practice leaving, and returning to the dog frequently, starting when you first bring the dog into your home and family. It is important that owners help their dog, or puppy to find a happy medium between companionship and becoming sufficiently independent to tolerate being alone for longer periods.

How to help and avoid a dog suffering from separation anxiety.

- Create a routine.
- Take your dog for a long walk before you are going to leave as once a dog has got rid of its excess energy it is more likely to relax and sleep.

- Create some distance between you and the dog on a daily basis. For example leave her in another room and don't allow her to follow you around.
- Desensitise the dog by preparing to leave but not actually leaving. Get ready to go, get the keys etc. Walk around like that as if you are preparing to go then put everything back down and get on with what you were doing. Do this regularly to build up to leaving.
- Start leaving the dog for short periods of time on her own. Ignore her when you leave and when you return. Start with short amounts of time and gradually increase them. It is very important to ignore her when you leave and when you return.
- Only reward a calm mind and Calm behaviour. Never give affection to excitement or demanding. Don't give in to persistent neediness because it is easier as this will undo the work that you are doing and won't help her at all. No animal can be happy in a state of anxiety.



Changing behaviour requires time, patience, commitment and consistency.