



LARIMER HUMANESOCIETY

Guide to Separation Anxiety

Congratulations on adopting the new member of your family! This particular dog has a history of possibly having Separation Anxiety. This handout will briefly explain what Separation Anxiety is and what you can do to help!

What is Separation Anxiety?

True Separation Anxiety is a serious behavioral problem that may require professional help. According to Patricia McConnell, Ph.D., "Separation Anxiety in dogs is a serious emotional problem, where the dog becomes panicked when his owner leaves... Severe Separation Anxiety is similar to a panic attack in humans... The dog behaves as though she is terrified and in extreme cases will risk life and limb to find her owner or someone else to pack up with." A dog with Separation Anxiety will chew and dig near doors and windows in an attempt to follow the owner. House soiling will occur almost immediately after the owner leaves and will also be located near the doors and windows.

What isn't Separation Anxiety?

Chewing furniture, whining, barking, or house soiling when the owner is gone does not mean a dog has Separation Anxiety. On their own, each of these behaviors is pretty typical of a common dog. Dogs that chew furniture are most likely bored. Dogs that bark are most likely barking at something outside. Dogs that house soil most likely are not potty trained. Most dogs will exhibit at least some of these behavior in the absence of their owner.

What can you do?

If a dog is chewing, barking, or house soiling, each of these problems can be managed by utilizing a crate when the owner is not home. Crates prevent dogs from chewing things they shouldn't and having accidents in the home. Dogs can also be provided with chew toys and puzzle toys to keep them occupied during the day. Some dogs may need to be potty trained by rewarding the dog when he potties outside, and ignoring accidents that occur in the home.

If a dog is showing signs of true Separation Anxiety, seek professional help. A fantastic resource for Separation Anxiety is *I'll Be Home Soon! How to Prevent and Treat Separation Anxiety* by Patricia McConnell, Ph.D.

If you have tried what is provided here and still have questions, contact behaviorhelp@larimerhumane.org or call 970-226-3647 ext. 513