

Does Your Pet Have a ‘Pawblem’ Being Home Alone?



Anyone who has opened the front door to mayhem after leaving a pet home alone will tell you that separation anxiety is more than a little crying when you leave the house. **We’re here to help you learn to recognize separation anxiety – and manage it.¹**

1 First, look for signs of anxiety or stress and share what you’re seeing with your veterinarian. Together, you can develop a plan to help minimize your pet’s anxiety.

2 Then, find ways to help your pet cope. You may have to try several methods until you find one or two that work for your pet.

Separation Anxiety in Dogs

Does Your Dog?²

- Urinate and defecate accidentally
- Bark and howl
- Chew, dig, and act destructively
- Escape
- Pace, pant and drool
- Shake, tremble, and cling
- Demonstrate coprophagia (eat feces)
- Lose his appetite

Ways to Help Your Dog Cope

- Create a safe space or train your dog to stay in a kennel
- Avoid dramatic entrances and exits
- Enjoy plenty of walks and lots of exercise
- Switch it up for mental stimulation: new sights, sounds, and smells – trips to the park, rides in the car
- Provide enrichments – puzzle and chew toys
- Talk to your veterinarian about medication



Separation Anxiety in Cats



Does Your Cat?³

- Excessively meow or vocalize
- Eat too fast or not at all
- Excessively self-groom
- Eliminate outside the litter box, spray
- Exhibit destructive behavior, scratch
- Hide
- Demonstrate unusual excitement upon your return
- Behave aggressively

Ways to Help Your Cat Cope⁴

- Play soothing music
- Avoid dramatic entrances and exits
- Provide enrichment – puzzle feeders and treat dispensers
- Create stimulation with toys and scratch pads
- Schedule daily play sessions
- Talk to your veterinarian about synthetic pheromones or anxiety-reducing medications

Ready. Set. Go.

Five Simple Steps to Get Your Pet Ready for Your Return to School or Work^v

- 1 Re-introduce workday routines slowly & practice leaving the house.** Before returning to work, re-introduce your pet to a workday schedule. Start waking, feeding, walking, and playing with them at consistent times. Don't make a fuss as you leave or return – this makes your pet's anxiety worse. Schedule short departures daily and gradually lengthen the time you are gone. Consider leaving a small treat to lessen anxiety.
- 2 Wear them out & keep them busy.** Before leaving, go for a walk or play with your pet to help them “burn” off some energy. A tired pet is a calm pet! And, while you're gone, a chew toy, food puzzle, or treat dispenser can help keep your pet occupied and entertained. Consider rotating their toys by leaving different items on different days.
- 3 Create a safe space.** Pets like safe spaces and if your pet is trained to stay in a kennel, the time is now to re-introduce the routine. Make it rewarding for your pet to use the kennel for short periods like at feeding time. If your pet shows signs of anxiety, gradually increase the length of time in the kennel to minimize distress.
- 4 Pet-proof your home.** If you don't kennel, make sure your pet is ready to be alone in the house. Common items like furniture, accent pieces, trashcans, and more may look like toys or things to chew or scratch to pass the time. Take some time to pick-up items or remove them. Childproof locks on cabinets and baby gates can help keep your pet safe.
- 5 Watch for signs of stress & don't be afraid to ask for help.** Excessive barking or crying, destructive behavior, and inappropriate elimination in the house may be your pet's cry for help. If you're struggling to help your pet adjust, consider assistance from an animal behaviorist, trainer, dog walker, or daycare provider. A professional's assistance can boost your pet's confidence and put you at ease.



ⁱ How to Help Pets Manage Separation Anxiety When Their Humans Returns to Work *Advice from a Texas A&M clinical veterinarian* <https://today.tamu.edu/2021/01/04/how-to-help-pets-manage-separation-anxiety-when-their-humans-return-to-work/> Accessed July 21, 2021
ⁱⁱ <https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/training/separation-anxiety-dogs-puppies/> Accessed July 21, 2021
ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.metrovetchicago.com/services/cats/blog/8-signs-separation-anxiety-cats-and-what-do-about-them> Accessed July 21, 2021
^{iv} <https://www.fearfreehappyhomes.com/theyre-not-loners-cats-can-have-separation-anxiety-too/> Accessed July 21, 2021
^v AVMA <https://www.avma.org/news/press-releases/covid-19-7-steps-help-your-pet-prepare-your-return-work> Accessed July 21, 2021