



ANIMAL SURGICAL
— & ORTHOPEDIC CENTER —
A BETTER WAY TO OPERATE • SINCE 1986



[HOME](#) [SERVICES](#) [FOR PET OWNERS](#) [FOR VETERINARIANS](#) [WHY ASOC?](#) [BLOG & NEWS](#) [CONTACT](#)

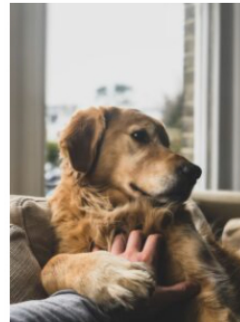
◀ [CCL injuries & tears: What are they and how are they treated?](#) [What to expect before, during, and after TPLO surgery](#) ▶

Blog

Signs of anxiety in dogs (and what to do about it!)

As we begin to re-open, more and more pet parents are noticing anxiety in their dogs when they are left alone, particularly after being home together for an extended time. Separation anxiety is one of the most common forms of anxiety in dogs – especially in breeds that are commonly working dogs and like to have their pack all in one place. Dogs that have gone through trauma or have been abandoned in the past (as is common with many rescue dogs) are also more prone to experience increased abandonment anxiety.

In this blog, we'll dive deep into the topic of anxiety in dogs, what the symptoms are, and what you can do to help your dog feel secure.



What Causes Anxiety in dogs?

Sometimes it might seem like anxiety comes out of nowhere, but it's usually brought on by some change in routine, environment, or activity.

This is especially important right now as areas begin to re-open after COVID-19 shutdowns, and your pets have become used to spending more time with you.

The sudden change in routine when returning to work can cause one of the most common types of anxiety in dogs: separation anxiety.

But that's not the only type of anxiety that dogs can experience.

Anxiety in dogs can present in many forms, such as:

1. **Separation anxiety:** This can occur when your dog is separated from you or other regular caretakers, from moving to a new location, or even a new schedule. This is what people typically think of when it comes to anxiety in their dogs.
2. **Generalized anxiety:** This often appears "out of the blue" with no known cause or trigger, even in dogs who have been well trained.
3. **Environmental anxiety:** This often presents as a fear of going out of the house or to a specific location, such as a vet clinic. Environmental anxiety can also be caused by loud noises or scary situations such as sirens, alarms, fireworks, or thunder.
4. **Social anxiety:** Anxious about being around different people or around other dogs. This may occur due to past trauma in rescues, or from simply not being socialized frequently.

These different types of anxiety can be caused by multiple factors and can also occur in conjunction with one another.

How can you tell if your dog has anxiety? Body language is often the best indicator.

Symptoms may vary from dog to dog depending on the type and severity of their anxiety, but the easiest way to identify if your dog is suffering from anxiety is by paying attention to their body language.

This can include subtle signs, like overreactions or unusual reactions when there are changes in location, people, or social situations. It might show up as barking or being overreactive but can also be as simple as not being interested in food when they're in a new environment.

OTHER BODY LANGUAGE SIGNS OF STRESS CAN INCLUDE:

- Panting
- Pacing or general restlessness
- Barking
- Whining
- Ears back and/or tail tucked
- Shaking or trembling
- Drooling
- Not eating on their normal schedule or being uninterested in food.

CHECK OUT WHAT'S NEW

CATEGORIES

- ASOC News
- Events
- Featured Testimonials
- Joint pain management
- Noteworthy
- Obesity
- Patient Heroes
- Pet Health
- Uncategorized

ARCHIVES

- December 2020
- November 2020
- October 2020
- September 2020
- August 2020
- June 2020
- April 2020
- March 2020
- February 2020
- December 2019
- November 2019
- October 2019
- August 2019
- July 2019
- June 2019
- May 2019
- April 2019
- March 2019
- January 2019
- December 2018
- October 2018
- July 2018
- June 2018
- April 2018
- March 2018
- January 2018
- November 2017
- October 2017
- September 2017
- June 2017
- May 2017
- April 2017
- March 2017
- February 2017
- December 2016
- November 2016
- October 2016
- September 2016
- August 2016
- July 2016
- June 2016
- May 2016
- April 2016
- March 2016
- January 2016

- Aggression
- Urinating or defecating in the house/where they shouldn't
- Destructive behavior (tearing up furniture carpets, etc.)
- Excessive barking
- Repetitive or compulsive behaviors
- Constantly looking for an escape (fight or flight)
 - Ex: constantly hiding in a crate or corner, behind furniture, etc.
- Digging or trying to escape enclosures

Pay attention to these behaviors, to see if they reoccur or if they were just a one-time issue. If your pet only acts out occasionally (by chewing on furniture one day, for example), then it might mean they were bored or didn't get enough exercise that day.

If these are reoccurring behaviors but you're not sure if your dog is showing other signs of anxiety, consider setting a webcam to monitor them when you're not home.

How to help your dog relax in the moment:

If you think your pet is displaying consistent signs of anxiety, there are ways you can help.

The important thing to know about anxiety in dogs, especially recurring anxiety, is that there isn't a 'magic bullet'. Below you'll find some techniques to help your dog calm down in an anxious situation, and later we'll talk about reducing anxiety in the long term.

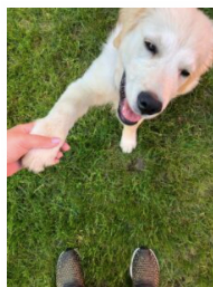
The first and most important step if you're seeing a consistent, high level display of these symptoms is to talk to your veterinarian to rule out possible medical issues. Sometimes dogs show symptoms of anxiety because they're sick!

If your vet agrees that anxiety is the cause, there are a few options to help your dog relax in the moment, depending on the type of anxiety they're experiencing.

TREATS/TOYS:

Licking is a soothing activity for dogs, so giving them something healthy they can lick keeps their brain occupied and helps them relax. For example – a toy stuffed with some canned pumpkin or low-fat cream cheese. Just make sure to account for those calories in your dog's daily caloric intake so they don't put on extra weight. Treats should only make up 10% of your dog's daily calories.

DISTRACT THEM WITH TRAINED BEHAVIORS:



If your dog is anxious and won't take any food to distract them, you can try engaging them with behavior commands such as sit, paw, lie down, etc. This is a great way to distract them and have them focus on working instead of whatever is causing the anxiety.

You can also use nose work games like hiding a treat and encouraging your pup to find it. This helps them to focus on something fun instead.

SAFE SPACES:

Create a place for your dog where they can go to relax. Ideally, you should always use the same bed, blanket, or mat and take it with you when you visit potentially stressful environments. Practice rewarding relaxed behaviors on it frequently, even when stress is low, to help your dog associate the mat with relaxing. This gives them

a safe space they can relax on when you leave the house, when you visit the vet, or experience anxiety triggers.

Crate training can also be helpful for many dogs. Some dogs love their crate and treat it as a safe space they can retreat to. However, if your dog hasn't been introduced to a crate before, don't use it when they are already anxious. Crates also shouldn't be used as punishment or constriction – it should be their safe space and should always be associated with comfort and possibly treats.



MASSAGES/TOUCH:

Sometimes all your dog needs to relax is a little bit of attention. Ear massages and forehead massages can also help your dog release tension.

AUDIO STIMULATION:

If your pet likes to have some noise throughout the day, one way you can help is by playing some music for them. Spotify even has a **specialty crafted podcast** that has over 14 hours of content, created just for your dog!

They also created a tool that generates a playlist based on your pet's personality [here](#).

How to fix long-term anxiety at home:

If your pet suffers from mild to moderate anxiety, there are a few steps you can take to reduce this at home without professional help. If these steps don't work, or if your dog has more severe anxiety, contact a local trainer who specializes in anxiety.

DESENSITIZATION:

One way to help reduce anxiety in dogs is to desensitize them to the 'triggers' that cause anxiety.

Think to yourself: What are the activities that I do (or that your pet experiences) that lead up to an anxious episode? Then start doing those activities in mundane, relaxed times to desensitize them.

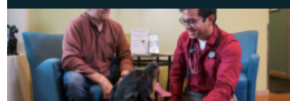
For example, if your pet gets anxious when you leave the house, identify the activities that lead to you leaving

- December 2015
- November 2015
- October 2015
- September 2015
- August 2015
- June 2015
- May 2015



READ OUR FAQ

Learn about office hours, consultations, payment options, and other frequently asked questions.



TAKE THE ASOC TOUR

Get a behind-the-scenes look at our facility.



EDIT PAGE

For example: if your pet gets anxious when you leave the house – identify the activities that lead to you leaving the house. (Picking up your keys, putting on shoes, pouring a to-go coffee, etc). Start doing these activities when you aren't leaving the house to desensitize your dog to the triggers, like picking up your keys and walking around with them. This tells your dog the keys (the trigger) isn't such a big deal.

- Also take a walk outside *without* your dog so they get used to not being home with you all the time. Slowly increase the amount of time that you're away from your dog, so they're accustomed to you leaving the house regularly by the time you go back to work.

This also works with environmental anxiety – like loud noises, alarms, or fireworks. Start with smaller, less triggering sounds and work your way up, until your dog realizes that these aren't as scary as they thought.

COUNTER CONDITIONING:

Counter conditioning is about **training your dog** to start seeing the triggers or stressors as a good thing (or at least a

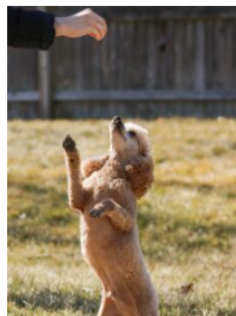
less-bad thing) instead of a negative. Give them something nice when the trigger happens, so they enjoy it instead of dreading it. For example: If a loud noise goes off (or if you're desensitizing with quieter noises) – give your dog a treat each time, and comfort them with touch.

For separation anxiety, make sure they have something to engage their mind when you're not there, such as a food puzzle toy.

SUPPLEMENTS AND OTHER 'STRESS RELIEF' PRODUCTS:

With severe anxiety, your veterinarian might recommend a prescription medication to help them cope with the stress. Be sure to talk to your vet before giving your pet any medications or supplements.

There are many over-the-counter supplements and 'stress relief' products available today. These supplements and products can be hit or miss. Some pets might experience relief, but the products are often not tested or regulated to ensure efficacy or consistency. If you do decide to try veterinary-recommended products or supplements, remember that they are not a replacement for training.



PROFESSIONAL TRAINING:

Sometimes dogs need professional help to overcome their anxiety, and this is where professional training is extremely helpful. Some trainers even specialize in helping dogs overcome anxiety and stress, such as a Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist (CAAB or ACAAB) or a board-certified veterinary behaviorist (Dip ACVB).

Remember, anxiety in dogs isn't a quick fix. It's not an overnight 'switch' that can be flipped with one training session or product. It takes a long-term approach working with your dog to help them overcome their issues. But with consistent training and dedication, you'll be able to help your pet overcome their anxiety and live their life to the fullest.

Most of all, don't get frustrated with your dog if they're acting out and behaving this way. It's not their fault! Your pet isn't doing this on purpose; rather, they're expressing their anxiety in the only way they know how.

Want to learn more about anxiety in dogs? Check out the "With A Dog" podcast, hosted by our very own Isabella (Issy) Barnes. They cover this topic in depth [here](#).

POSTED JUNE 24, 2020 BY ANIMAL SURGICAL IN [PET HEALTH](#) WITH NO COMMENTS AND TAGGED AS [ANIMAL SURGICAL CLINIC OF SEATTLE](#), [PET SAFETY](#)

[◀ Return to Blog](#)

0 Comments

Clinic Hours

Monday to Friday 8 AM – 6 PM

Saturday and Sunday Closed

Major Holidays Closed

Animal Surgical and Orthopedic Center

14810 15th Ave. NE
Shoreline, WA 98155
(206) 545-4322

COPYRIGHT ©2020
ANIMAL SURGICAL AND ORTHOPEDIC CENTER.
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. [SITE MAP](#).

