

# Separation Anxiety During the Holidays

*Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff*

During the holidays you may be away from your pet more often than usual. Most dogs will adjust to this and simply take a long nap until you get home. Some dogs, however, have difficulty being away from their owners because of temperament or training, and develop a condition called "separation anxiety." Some indications your dog may be suffering from separation anxiety over the holidays are shown in the sidebar at left.

Separation anxiety reaches across all ages and breeds. It is commonly seen in dogs with close relationships with their owners or who have had some sort of traumatic "separation event" (like some shelter dogs).

## 6 Indicators Your Dog Suffers from Separation Anxiety:

1. Anxiousness and depressive behavior when you're getting ready to leave
2. Attempting to bolt out the door with you when you leave
3. Whining or barking non-stop when you're gone
4. Urination or defecation in the house (with reliably housebroken dogs, not puppies)
5. Scratching and digging at doors or at the floor by the exit
6. Tearing or destroying furniture

## Why does he do it?

Your dog may engage in destructive behaviors to relieve anxiety. Punishing him for behaviors when you are gone is not effective - dogs have very short memories and studies have found that most of the destructive behavior occurs within the first half hour of your departure. He may be experiencing separation anxiety and is engaging in these destructive behaviors as an outlet.

## Curbing the problem... needs practical solutions

If you have a dog with separation anxiety, it is important to remember that your goal is to reduce his anxiety. Some actions you can take to curb his anxiety, and in turn the destructive behavior include:

- **Redirection** - offer your dog an interactive toy (like a [Tricky Treat Ball](#)).
- **Ignore your dog** for 20 minutes when you leave and when you return. Comings and goings should be low-key.
- **Alter your leaving times and "leaving cues."** Pick up your keys and coat when you aren't going out.
- **For short times** (less than two hours) you might want to try a product like [Ultra-Calm® Tablets](#) to help your pet relax.
- **If your dog has severe separation anxiety**, consult your veterinarian or an animal behaviorist. [Prescription canine anti-anxiety medication](#) in conjunction with behavior training has been shown to be effective.

**With a little patience and thoughtfulness...** YOU may be able to help your anxious dog through the holidays. This will not only help him, it may make this time of year less stressful for you too.



Calm  
Your Pet  
with  
Pheromones



Spray bottle is  
also available.

Many dog owners have seen a remarkable improvement in their dog's anxiety with a relatively new product, the [Comfort Zone Plug-In](#). Inserted into any wall outlet, and odorless to humans, it releases Dog Appeasing Pheromones (D.A.P.) in the air throughout the entire room. D.A.P. mimics a new mother's natural pheromones, reducing and preventing stress-related behaviors such as barking, whining, chewing, and soiling.



[Tricky Treat Ball](#)



[Ultra-Calm® Tablets](#)



[Ultra-Calm® Bites](#)