

Canine Stress & Anxiety

EXPLANATIONS

1. What kind of things cause stress in a dog and why?

We began to welcome dogs into our lives and homes because it was mutually beneficial to both of us. Like us, wild dogs (likely wolves) lived in family/social groups and were adept at group and cooperative living. They helped us be safe by warning us when intruders were nearby and they helped us secure food. But they lived a very active and outdoor life. Over time we began to use our canine companions for many other tasks: herding, hunting, taking care of rodents and other pests, protection and of course companionship. Still, they often lived outdoors, where they were active and had more control over their life.

Now our dogs live in houses and apartments that limit their ability to run, chase and work. Very few dogs have any jobs at all. While they live longer, healthier and safer lives they have less control over where they go, who they associate with both people and other animals. They often are in situations that they cannot escape or make them anxious, stressed and frightened. And, being social animals that bond to people, they often spend time alone.

2. What are the behavioral signs of stress and anxiety?

When they are stressed dogs may change their eating habits, eating faster or perhaps not eating at all. This is often evident by poor body condition and thinness.

- Stressed or anxious dogs may be destructive when left home alone
- Stressed or anxious dogs may eliminate indoors when home alone or during frightening events
- Stressed or anxious dogs may excessively lick body parts causing sores
- Stressed or anxious dogs may pant, pace, tremble and hide
- Stressed or anxious dogs may react easily to noises or new things with barking and excitement

3. What are the medical signs of stress and anxiety?

- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Change in body condition; obesity or thinness
- Anorexia (loss of appetite)
- Skin lesions from licking

4. What can be done to help diminish stress and anxiety in a dog?

- Adding Adaptil diffusers can decrease stress and anxiety associated with being home alone and with reactions to noises and storms, and other anxiety producing events
- Create an environment that allows your dog to have predictability and control
- Have one food bowl per dog and feed them in separate rooms
- Have several resting places throughout the house so all dogs can have a safe and quiet resting area
- Provide your dog with an enriched environment to keep them mentally stimulated
- Strive to have 10-15 minute sniff walks off your property 3 times a week
- Teach your dog tricks or have fun positive training sessions
- If dogs will not fight over food, provide your dog with food dispensing toys
- Set aside time every day to be with your dog for play, petting and just being nearby.

If these steps do not help your pet with their stress or anxiety, please consult your veterinarian for more help or referral to a board certified Veterinary Behaviorist.

