

Pets with Dr. Jyl

[KOVr 13 / PETS W/ DR. JYL / PETS TOPIC](#)

Dr. Jyl can be seen each Wednesday on the KOVR 13 News at Noon.

[SEPARATION ANXIETY IN DOGS \(3/14/01\)](#)

Dr. Jyl stopped by Wednesday to discuss Separation anxiety. Assisting Doctor Jyl were Omee and Max, who belong to the Rosenblooms of Carmichael.

As social animals, it is normal for puppies to form attachments to their mother and littermates. Once a puppy is separated from its family group, it becomes attached to its owner. However, when a dog becomes overly dependent on its owner, problem behaviors' may result.

There are many problem behaviors' associated with separation anxiety including: defecation and urination in inappropriate locations, destructive behavior, excessive barking and whining, depression, and hyperactivity. These behaviors' may also be the symptoms of other problems. However, if undesired behaviors' are clearly related to the absence of the owner, occur shortly after departure and a prolonged greeting response occurs upon the owner's return, separation anxiety is the probable cause.



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Separation anxiety may occur in dogs with an abnormal predisposition to dependency. Traumatic events in a young dog's life may also increase the likelihood of the development of very strong attachments. These events include; early separation from the mother, deprivation of attachment early in life (puppies kept in pet shops or animal shelters), a sudden change of environment (new home, stay at a kennel), a change in owner's lifestyle which results in a sudden end to constant contact with the animal, a long-term or permanent absence of a family member (divorce, death, child leaving home) or the addition of a new family member (baby, pet).



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Some methods for treating problem behavior include: punishment crate-training, and obedience training. These methods are directed at the problem behavior, however they fail to address the source of the problem. By ignoring the source of the problems, one undesirable behavior may simply be replaced with another as the dog searches for an outlet for its anxiousness. Therefore, punishment is not recommended as an acceptable method of treating separation anxiety.

When a puppy or new dog is brought into the home, it is important to avoid situations that may encourage an excessive attachment to develop. Your dog should slowly become accustomed to staying alone. This can be accomplished by crate-training when the pup is young. As well, ensuring that the dog does not constantly follow the owner and gradually adjusts to being alone in the house will go a long way toward a healthy owner-pet relationship.

If you think your pet may be the victim of separation anxiety it is important to take measures to alleviate the problem soon. Unfortunately it is not something that will simply disappear with time. Your vet may be able to help get a treatment program started or could refer you to an animal behaviorist who may be more familiar with treatment alternatives.

Don't miss each week's segment with Dr. Jyl on the News at Noon!