



SEPERATION ANXIETY

Some Greyhounds can be prone to Separation Anxiety because they have never spent any time alone as they have always had the company of other greyhounds. However, there are several things you can do to prevent SA problems. Symptoms may include some of the following: soiling, chewing, shredding beds, crying, panting, shaking, and vocalizing. Some dogs will become anxious as the human begins to get ready to leave (i.e. put on shoes, grab keys). The following guidelines are suggested for preventing separation anxiety in newly adopted dogs:

Spend time ignoring your greyhound completely, refrain from giving lots of affection, and especially ignore any demands for petting. Think of your love and attention as a drug. If too much, too soon is given to your new greyhound, he may become addicted and suffer terribly (separation anxiety) when you are gone. Your focus needs to be all about teaching routines and house rules. Make sure your new greyhound has good manners, is housetrained, quiet, and comfortable home alone before you start gradually becoming more affectionate. Please exercise your new greyhound, but petting and cuddling needs to be kept to a minimum. Generally, we recommend crating for new greyhounds. Place your crate in an open area that gives the greyhound the largest view of the home. If you opt to confine the greyhound to a safe room, do NOT close the door. **Closing the door, especially to a room, can panic a dog.** Use a baby gate instead.

Practice separation daily. This is extremely important for someone that is home for most of the day or who takes vacation days to settle in the new greyhound. **The greyhound's expectation that you are not always together needs to be established on day one.** Practice putting your greyhound where you plan to keep him when you are away from the house. Give him a medium sized stuffed Kong while you spend time out of sight. Run a quick errand or spend time in another room. 30 minutes later return and if your greyhound is calm and quiet allow him to come out of the crate or safe area for a period of time. Then repeat the process. The more repetitions you can do the first few days the better. Separation anxiety is usually worse in the first 30 minutes, so the more you can practice leaving for short periods of time, the faster your greyhound learns that alone time is special because of the stuffed Kong and you always come back.

Vocalizing can be normal in the beginning. Do not return to your greyhound until he is quiet. If he begins to vocalize as you return, turn your back on your greyhound and wait for him to settle down. You can use a water squirt bottle if your greyhound is very noisy.

Greetings and goodbyes should be calm and free of drama. It is best to ignore your dog 10 minutes before you leave and 10 minutes after you arrive home. Often people misinterpret excitement as love, but an excited dog is on the verge of stress and anxiety. Allowing the greyhound to cry, dance around, and jump on you while you give affection validates that separation was a terrible thing. A dog that greets you calmly loves you just as much, but is happy and well adjusted.

Kong's – Stuff Kong's with portions of your greyhound's meals, or treats. You can mix a cup of dry dog food with yogurt or cottage cheese and spoon the mixture into several Kong's. You can also fill a Kong with dry dog food and then use a butter knife to mix in a dollop of peanut butter, crème cheese, or canned dog food. Use the knife to create a sticky mixture inside of the Kong. After some practice, your greyhound may learn to clean out the Kong very quickly. If that happens, you can opt to freeze your Kong's ahead of time so they are more difficult for the greyhound and last longer. It is helpful if you have 3 or 4 medium sized Kong's.

Some dogs do not cope well with being left at home alone. If you come back to a pile of poo, or irate neighbours who have been deafened by a crying dog, or chewed up furniture, please, please do not chastise the dog. He did it because he couldn't cope, and he will be even more stressed the next time you leave him, the results will be worse.

1. You can deal with this by treating the symptoms.

For example; put him in his own safety space. Like an Indoor kennel or a utility room when you go out. Give him toys - or better still toys like Kong's stuffed with treats. Leave the radio on.

2. Or you can be really clever and solve the underlying problem. Is he suffering from anxiety at being left alone, or is he bored?

If it is anxiety, treat the symptoms as above and make sure you make no fuss on leaving him. Just pick your keys and go. Say nothing. When you come back in, do the same. Ignore him completely till he relaxes (yawns, stretches, blinks or lies down) then reward him by making a fuss of him. This way you are informing him that you are the leader in this home and you do not need his protection. You are strong enough to come and go as you please.

If it is boredom that is causing the problem, take him for a long walk and make sure he has had plenty of games to occupy his mind.

Some dogs take a while to understand games but they will increase in fun and excitement once they have got the hang of it. Some favourites are;

Hide and seek. Get someone to hold him while you hide, then keep calling him invitingly till he finds you.

Hunt the treat. Hide treats around the garden and encourage him to rush round finding them.

Fetch a toy. You will need to work on teaching this on some of the dogs, eventually he may get it.

From day one, build up separation in small steps. Pop out of the room and shut the door. Wait silently till he stops fussing for a few seconds then go straight back in and reward him. Next time make it a bit longer and so on, till he understands that you will be coming back as long as he waits quietly. Now build up into leaving the house for a few minutes and gradually lengthen the time you are away. Never come back in if he is making a fuss. Always wait till it is quiet, and then give immediate praise. If there is a poo, or damage do not make a fuss. If you are calm, he will learn from you

Do not despair... It will get better, honestly. Do not give up on your dog, this will just increase his anxiety if returned back at kennels and make his next rehoming even more traumatic.