



FEATURE

Reducing separation anxiety in pets



Working from home has become the new normal, but what happens when life slowly returns to normal and your four-legged dog or cat is left to their own devices?

To help reduce separation anxiety in pets and ensure a smooth transition back into 'real life' as COVID-19 restrictions begin to lift across the country, PETstock VET, Dr Sasha Nefedova, has compiled some expert tips to aid pet parents with the process.

Monitoring symptoms of Anxiety

For any animal that already suffers from anxiety the transition will be difficult. Even for dogs that have not shown any pre-existing signs of anxiety, being with their pet parent for every hour of the day to suddenly only mornings and nights is likely to take an emotional toll on your pet.

Symptoms of anxiety in pets include trembling, licking of lips, pacing, increased drooling or salivation, shaking, or a decrease in appetite.

Allocate alone time

Establishing a strong, daily routine will ensure your dog can have a sense of safe familiarity when you return to the office.

While working at home, it is recommended that you physically distance yourself from your pet for at least an hour twice a day. Placing your dog or cat in a quiet room away from you and your workspace, or in the backyard, will help make the transition to your sudden absence much easier on them.

Daily Exercise

While you're at home, ensure you're taking your dog out for a walk before or after each workday. Keeping walks to before, or after work, will help establish a routine that they are familiar with when you return to your workplace, rather than expecting a walk at lunchtime. Exercising together daily will improve the bond between you and your pet, as well as calm them and reduce their anxiety.

Toys

Enrichment toys such as a Kong or food puzzles will keep your dog busy for hours and offer a sense of comfort. Giving your dog a 'job' to do will keep them mentally stimulated and help manage their anxiety or boredom. However, it's important that you identify the cause of their anxiety so you're not at risk of reinforcing the issue.

Calming accessory

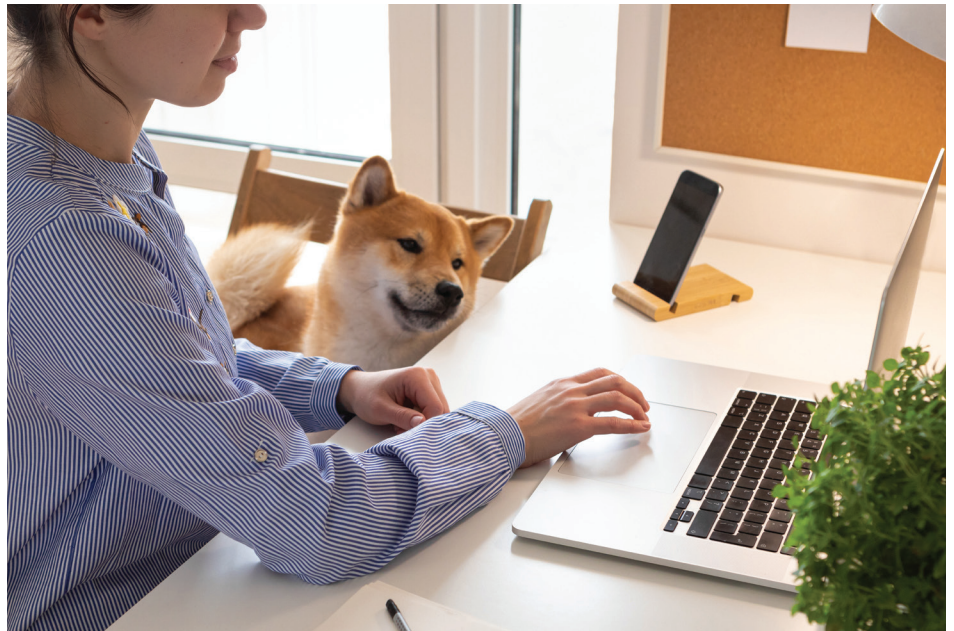
A Thundershirt is an anti-anxiety weighted coat for dogs, that works to calm their nerves if they are feeling anxious, overexcited or fearful; particularly during winter when there is greater chance of storms, heavy rain, or hail. The gentle, constant pressure of a Thundershirt has a calming affect on a dog's nervous system and is a safe and drug free solution to help combat your dog's anxiety.

Play music

Some pets with anxiety respond well to music being played. Calming music in the background is an effective distraction from silence and will sooth their nerves.

While you are still working at home, it's the perfect time to test this method so that you can monitor their reaction closely. If they sleep and don't present any signs of feeling anxious, then leave some music playing throughout the day, when you make the transition back to your workplace.

If your pet's anxiety worsens, speak to your vet about medication to help with their condition.



You can also call 13 PETS for more information, or alternatively video chat with a veterinarian in Australia, 6am to midnight from the comfort of your own home, on PETstock's Vet Chat service: <https://www.petstock.com.au/vet/chat>

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