



PET ADVICE – DOGS THAT DESTROY WHEN ALONE

When left alone at home, many puppies become distressed and then engage in undesirable behaviour. This can be anything from whining, barking or chewing, to a breakdown in toilet control. For most puppies this is a passing phase and they learn to adapt to being on their own. However, for some adult dogs the stress of separation continues, often with expensive or noisy consequences. The destructive dog is usually a well-behaved, much loved pet in every other respect. He thrives on human company, hence the anxiety when separated from you. Listed below are some tips to help a dog suffering from separation anxiety:

- Try to exclude the dog from items of value, perhaps to an indoor kennel or porch.
- Destructive dogs are rarely bored dogs; however, a long walk and play off the lead before departure will produce a calmer pet.
- Ensure you provide a warm inviting bed to encourage sleep.
- Over-affectionate or prolonged 'goodbyes' will only increase the feeling of desolation after departure. Try to deprive your dog of attention for 15 minutes before leaving.
- Make brief or mock departures, as well as true departures, so that the length of time left alone becomes unpredictable.
- Putting your coat on, picking up keys and putting shoes on all become predictable of you leaving and cause to heighten anxiety. Put your coat or shoes on in the house and just sit down; this way the dog will learn not to associate the act of putting your shoes on as a bad thing.
- Damage usually occurs within the first 15 minutes of you leaving. Practice leaving the dog for short periods of time and gradually increase the time span once the dog is accustomed to you leaving.
- Leave your dog with a favourite toy; try keeping that toy only for when you are leaving the dog alone. A Kong is a toy designed especially for dogs with separation problems
- Always be loving on your return, never punish the dog for any mishaps that have occurred whilst you were out.
- It will help to restructure your relationship with a dog: a dog who is self-reliant will handle being left alone better than a dog that is very reliant on you.

