

Our next six week internship in Dog Training,  
Instructor Skills Development, Animal  
Learning Theory and Behavior Therapy begins  
on [April 7, 2003](#)



[Home](#)



Animal Behavior  
Center of New York  
New York City



American Foundation  
for Animal Rescue  
Fighting animal cruelty,  
Finding homes for dogs.  
List your shelter and  
more!



[TopDog Arena!](#)



[Canine Library](#)



Search:

Books

Enter keywords...

CANINES OF AMERICA  
*World of Dog Training*



*Helping to make your  
Best Friend better!*

[an error occurred while processing this directive]

**W**elcome to our  
**Canine Behavior Section.**

## Separation Anxiety

*Separation anxiety* is diagnosed in around 10% of the behavior cases referred to Canines of America by veterinarians in the New York City area. When left alone, most dogs find a familiar spot and go to sleep. However, a dog suffering from separation anxiety will become extremely anxious. Not understanding where you or your family has gone or if you will ever return, the dog exhibits behavior which may include chewing, barking, salivating, urinating, defecating, vomiting or escape behavior, such as chewing through walls, scratching through doors, busting out of cages or digging under fences if left outdoors. In some cases, the dog simply gets sick, perhaps due to some form of depression.

### Probable Causes

Factors at the root of this disorder include species specific predispositions, genetics, early learning and owner behavior. Your dog is a social, pack animal who relies on the others for individual protection by safety in numbers. Dogs that lack confidence, due to under socialization, lack of understanding of what is expected (obedience training) or because of mistreatment in the past (abandonment, unusually long confinement and alike) are more likely to exhibit behaviors related to separation anxiety.

### Treatment

Treatment for separation anxiety varies from dog to dog. Extreme cases should be referred to a qualified animal behavior consultant or board certified veterinary behaviorist. However, there are things you can do to help a dog with separation anxiety and things you should avoid doing.

- Plan Your Exit

When it is time to leave, just leave. Do not say "Good



**Nickelodeon Cat Dog**  
Arcade-style gameplay  
Media: CD-ROM  
Or visit our  
[BookCenter](#)

bye" to your dog with hugs and kisses. In fact, ignore your dog for five minutes before you go. Paying too much attention will make your dog feel more insecure when the attention is abruptly withdrawn.

- **Leave a Distraction**

Prepare a "Bye-Bye" bone. Purchase a sterilized; hollow bone from the pet store. Fill it with goodies such as dried liver pet treats, beef jerky, peanut butter, cheese or other things your dog really likes. Keep it hidden and take it out when you leave each day. Place it near your dog just before you close the door. When you arrive home, poke the goodies left in the bone out so your dog gets them. Then put the bone away. The bone only comes out when you leave. We are attempting to distract your dog with something that he will find interesting enough to concentrate on your leaving. Hopefully, he will appreciate the bone so much that he will look forward to it coming out in place of getting upset with your leaving.

- **Confine Your Dog When You Are Away**

Confining your dog during your times of absence has two positive results. First, a dog who is confined to a carrier or crate cannot do damage to your home. Secondly, a crate, when properly introduced, will act as a safe, comfortable den where the dog can relax. Limiting his movement also acts as an anxiety reducer for most dogs.

- **Leave the Radio On**

Tune a radio to a talk station, put it on in a room you are often in, the bedroom is usually a good choice, and close the door. The dog will hear the human voices from your room and may not feel so alone. I have had some clients tape record their own voices and play the recording in place of the radio program. Dogs know the sound of your voice all too well. And remember, since the dog is most anxious just after you leave, a one hour recording will most probably do.

- **Practice This Training Routine**

With most dogs, the hardest time for them is immediately after you leave. Their anxious (and sometimes destructive) behavior occurs within the first hour after they are left alone. It will be your job to reshape your dog's behavior through reinforcement training. Leave your dog out of his crate, put your coat on, walk to the door and leave. Come back in immediately. Greet your dog calmly. Tell him to sit. When he does, reinforce this behavior with a food treat he enjoys. Wait a few minutes and then repeat the exercise, this time remaining outside a few seconds longer. Continue practicing leaving and returning over the next few weeks, always remembering to return, greet your dog calmly and command him to sit before offering a treat.

- Establish Your Leadership

When a dog has a strong leader, it has a calming effect on him. He feels safe and taken care of. In the absence of a strong leader, your dog feels obligated to assume that position in the social hierarchy of the family pack. Since a leader must control all that goes on, his inability to control your leaving causes him stress and anxiety. I had a case with a male Lhasa Apso who would bite at an owner's leg each morning when she attempted to leave for work. He would exhibit dominant behavior to try to stop his owner from leaving which would then cause him stress which he wished to avoid. Obedience training is the best organized method of establishing yourself as a strong leader.

- Exercise Your Dog

A dog who is lacking exercise is more likely to have stress and tension. Tiring a dog out with a long walk, run or with play goes a long way in reducing stress.

Once again, if the anxiety persists, consult a qualified animal behaviorist. Check his credentials and call some veterinary and customer references. Checking with your local Better Business Bureau is also a good idea. In some cases, a behaviorist will recommend a behavior modification program coupled with a pharmaceutical such as Prozac to help the therapy program along. This would be done together with your veterinarian.

[Home](#)

[Animal Talk Radio](#) | [It's About Animals](#)

[Career Studies](#) | [ABCNY](#)

[American Foundation for Animal Rescue](#)

[Canines of America Trainers Network](#)

[Canine Library](#)

[TopDog Awards](#) | [Chat Room](#)

[Canine Memorial](#) | [Disclaimer](#)

American Foundation for Animal Rescue  
89-10 Eliot Avenue  
Rego Park, New York 11374 USA  
Voice: 1.718.205.0200  
Fax: 1.718-205-3962  
E-mail: [Info & Comments](#)

Copyright © 1997-2001, Canines.com All Rights Reserved  
Site Work by: [APalumbo Consultants](#)

[an error occurred while processing this directive]