



COVID-19 has caused many disruptions to our everyday routines, including time spent with our pets! If you have found yourself working from home and are planning to return to your workplace, there are some strategies to help ease this transition for your dog.

Separation Anxiety

Some dogs may experience separation anxiety when their pet guardian returns to the workplace after being home full-time. All dogs cope differently with changes to routines, so it's difficult to predict how our pets might respond. Dogs who meet the following criteria may be especially prone:

- Having a previous history of mild to severe separation anxiety
- Dogs or puppies recently adopted from a shelter, rescue organization, or obtained from another source who have not been left alone at home

Though these populations may be at higher risk for developing separation anxiety, any dog may develop distress with an abrupt and significant change in daily routine. To learn more about signs of separation anxiety behaviour in dogs, visit our resource on [Separation Anxiety](#)

Be Proactive

Implementing some simple preventative strategies can help reduce the risk of your dog developing separation anxiety once you return to your workplace:

- Try to keep your dog's daily routine relatively consistent. Include everything from wake-up and bedtimes, feeding and exercise or play schedules, to bathroom breaks. Adjust their schedule to closely match what it will be like when you return to work. Predictability and consistency help reduce anxiety.
- Leave home each day without your dog and gradually increase the time you spend away. This helps your dog adjust to your absence. Start to encourage your dog to spend time alone in the home slowly when starting.

If you have recently adopted and have not left them alone yet – we recommend visiting our EHS resource on [Separation Anxiety](#).

- Designate a quiet, low-traffic rest area with your dog's preferred bedding, a couple of favourite toys, and a food enrichment to encourage them to spend time positively in this space.



- When you leave, provide your dog with various enrichments so they begin to associate your departure with something positive. Be sure to rotate the types of enrichments each week to keep your dog interested. Here are a few examples:
 - Fill a [KONG®](#) toy with nut butter and/or dog treats *xylitol-free
PRO TIP: Freeze the toy to make it last longer and as a great treat to chill
 - Puzzle toys
 - Snuffle mats
 - Treat scavenger hunt around the house
- Set up [pet surveillance](#) to monitor your dog after you leave. While some intermittent barking is normal, constant or significant distress behaviours should be addressed humanely.

Tips from Fear Free Happy Homes

Fear Free Happy Homes[®] has some strategies for reducing anxiety in dogs, which includes:

- Use a calming pheromone called [Adaptil®](#) available in a diffuser, spray, or collar form. If using the spray, do not spray it on your pet
- Wrap your pup in a vest/shirt demonstrated to have a calming effect in some dogs with a [Thundershirt®](#). Note that some may come with a Thunderease pheromone product.
- Play some soothing music in the background to promote relaxation. Studies have shown classical music can be calming for dogs. There is also videos and music designed specifically for canine companions, such as [DogTV](#) or [iCalmDog™](#)
- Use the oral supplement, [Zylkene®](#) which contains a hydrolyzed milk protein (casein) to help decrease stress in some dogs. Please seek a Veterinary consultation before using this product.
- Use the [Calming Care Probiotic Supplement](#) from Purina[®] ProPlan Veterinary Diets sprinkled on your dog's food. This supplement provides a strain of beneficial bacteria (BL999) demonstrated in some dogs to promote calm behaviour during stressful situations. Please seek a Veterinary consultation before using this product.

Source: Fear Free Happy Homes. Will Separation Anxiety Strike After Coronavirus?

<https://fearfreehappyhomes.com/separation-anxiety/>



When to Seek Help

If your dog is experiencing significant signs of separation anxiety despite prevention strategies, seek consultation from a certified dog trainer and/or veterinarian. Some concerning behaviours are:

- Constant barking, whining, howling, pacing, or drooling
- Inappropriate elimination in the house (especially if housetrained)
- Destructive behaviours such as digging, scratching, chewing household items, or attempts to escape the home
- You have provided preferred food enrichment items that your dog has not touched

Some interim solutions while you work on addressing your dog's separation anxiety can include:

- Take your dog to a reputable dog daycare facility or kennel
- Leave your dog in the care of a friend, family member, or qualified pet sitter
- Exercise your dog, especially in the morning before you leave home or hire a dog walker during the day

Additional Resources:

The Training Academy at the Edmonton Humane Society offers private consultations for behavioural issues such as separation anxiety. For more information, visit our website:

<https://www.edmontonhumanesociety.com/what-we-do/education-training/dog-training/private-consultations/>

Did You Know?

You can also ask us behaviour questions by emailing:

askthespecialist@edmontonhumanesociety.com

It takes approximately \$7 million to keep the Edmonton Humane Society operational for one year and 40% of these funds come from generous donations made by supporters like you. Please [Donate](#).