**SEPARATION ANXIETY**

**Congratulations on adopting your new family member!**

Dogs with separation anxiety may bark or howl, be destructive or urinate/defecate in the house when left alone. The destructive behavior tends to be centered on doors and windows because these lead to where the owner may have left or are a way to get out to where the owner may be. Some dogs will pull up carpet or flooring around the entry and exit ways. Many dogs will display symptoms of separation anxiety when first transitioning to a new home but most get over it with just a little bit of time. Here are some things you can do to help your dog adjust sooner.

- **Practice short departures:** On your first day with your new dog, start to leave the house for very short amounts of time while your dog is in their crate. They should have a high value chew (like a frozen kong) EVERY time they are in their crate. It’s very important to pay no attention to your dog when you leave. First, just go in and out the door and then release the pet from the crate. If your dog doesn’t panic, take the trash outside or pick up the mail. Then leave the house for five minutes or so. Then try to build up to ten minutes or so. Open the garage door, set the security alarm, and drive the car around the block. All of these things are signals to the dog that you are leaving and it is important to desensitize your pup to them! Over the first two days, try to progress to at least thirty minutes. Allow your dog time to relax and have fun in between sessions. If your dog starts to panic, SLOW down! Wait a couple of hours before practicing again. The goal is to have your dog be relaxed when they are alone. If you are patient and don’t go faster than your dog can tolerate, both of you will be happier!

- **Making too big a deal of your coming and going will over excite your dog and can cause them to become needlessly stressed. Be calm when leaving and arriving!**

- **Don’t allow your dog to be too much of a Velcro dog! Encourage independent behavior and make sure to praise your dog calmly whenever they choose to go and spend some time on their own in their crate.**

- **Give your dog a long lasting chew every time you leave!** Although some anxious dogs won’t eat when left alone, many will and when they do, their anxiety is reduced. Chewing can be very self-soothing for many dogs! Try a kong toy filled with cheese spread, some peanut butter, wet food or some treats. Freeze it for a few hours for even longer lasting fun for your pup! Give the yummy kong to your pet when you leave and pick it up when you come home.
Please note that some dogs are more comfortable in a crate and others prefer a more open area. If you have any questions about safe containment of your new pet, please let us know!

If you are having issues managing/treating your dog’s separation anxiety issues, please contact our trainer at JGibson@adltexas.org for more tips and information!

*Special thanks to the center for shelter dogs for this resource.