

the location and the storm. Soon this could be a dog that does not want to go on walks or even set foot outside of the house.

If the dog experiences a storm whilst trapped in the kitchen, where there is no escape route, then massive destruction can result as the dog tries to find a way out. This dog might easily be classified as having separation anxiety, which is not the case at all.

Separation anxiety

Many dogs are noisy or destructive while the owner is out.

This does not constitute separation anxiety; they may simply be bored or lonely.

There are also many that have fears of storms or other events, so that they become destructive whilst nobody is at home.

It is crucial to differentiate between the various causes of separation problems and not to lump everything under the banner of separation anxiety.

Separation anxiety is actually not that common in comparison with other causes of problems in the absence of the owner.

Prevention is possible, and there are key factors that can increase the chances of separation anxiety, for example:

- Lack of opportunities for pups to develop confident exploratory activity in the absence of people, littermates and the bitch.
- Lack of stimulation in the environment or periods of brief but pleasant isolation whilst young.
- Rehoming
- A period of illness
- A period of illness, unemployment or emotional trauma for the owner that increases contact between the dog and the owner.
- Senescence.

Diagnosis.

The key elements in diagnosis is a comprehensive history detailing the behaviour of the dog, its relationship with the owner and the animal, and any signs of an over-attachment problem.

Video evidence is easy to obtain, and invaluable in forming a complete picture of what is going on in the owner's absence.

This is particularly true when there are several animals sharing the same house.

Some good clues that there is genuine separation anxiety are:

Barking, destruction or housesoiling *every time* the owner goes out, no matter how briefly.

It starts almost immediately after the owner has gone

Destruction is often part of an attempt to escape (damaged doors, windows, floors) or directed at things that have recently been in contact with the owner (clothes, shoes, handbag etc)

The dog becomes distressed even if the owner leaves the room momentarily.

It follows the owner from room to room all the time they are at home.

The dog becomes withdrawn or anxious as the owner prepares to leave.

The dog tries to escape or becomes aggressive as the owner leaves the house.

The dog is overwhelmingly glad to see them return.

The dog sleeps in the owner's bedroom at night and cannot cope with sleeping elsewhere.

The dog is not reassured if a different person is present while the owner is away.

Dogs with true separation anxiety feel genuine panic and distress when the owner leaves.

Here are a few do's and don'ts, but the problem really needs professional advice and is beyond the range of these notes.

Do's...

Ignore the dog for ten minutes before leaving and twenty minutes after returning
Leave a radio on all of the time.
Make a tape of the family talking and play it while you are out.
Gradually get the dog used to sleeping out of the bedroom.
Provide the dog with a comfy bed where it can sleep during the day, and regularly reward it for staying there.
Only give the dog things to chew when you are out; pick them up and put them away as soon as you get back. Chewing is part of a dog's normal response to stress, and can help to comfort them.
Keep to the same general routine at weekends and weekdays; come and go on Sunday so that your absence on Monday is not too much of a shock.
Desensitise the dog to the signals that mean you are going out (picking up keys, putting on coats) by doing these things and staying in the house.
Get into the habit of shutting doors behind you so that the dog cannot continually follow you around the house.
Practice coming and going frequently for very short periods so the dog gets used to this.
Don't say "Goodbye" just leave!

Don'ts...

Never punish the dog for what it has done while you are out.
Never try to make up for your absence during the week by doing more with the dog at weekends.
Never greet the dog immediately when you return

One of the most important things is to avoid punishing dogs for doing things while the owner was out; the dog will simply regard the owner as aggressive and unpredictable because it will not remember what the punishment is for.

When a dog skulks up to the owner it is common for the owner to assume that this is because the dog 'knows that it has done wrong'.

This is a fundamental misjudgement. Dog will submit as a natural response to rising tension in the owner's body language and behaviour, and will often submit because they are unsure whether the owner is angry or not.

It pays the dog to take no risks and to submit before trouble arises!

With genuine separation anxiety it is not acceptable to use social isolation (such as putting the dog in a shed) to manage the problem. This may make the dog's distress much worse.

Medical therapy may well be necessary, but ACP and other sedatives are useless even in the short term. It is not safe to use a restrictive cloth muzzle (Mikki type) for these dogs; as they are anxious and need to pant to maintain their body temperature

Feline behavioural problems

Cats can show aggressiveness and overattachment in similar ways to dogs.

It is vital, however, that concepts such as dominance are not transferred to this species.

Cat behaviour is fundamentally different from that of the dog.

The key concept is that the cat is a solitary hunter and most of its communication is designed to maintain distance from other cats that are not accepted as part of its social group.

The communication can be extremely subtle, such as tail position, eye contact and blinking. It can also be invisible, such as the odour marks left by facial or flank rubbing.

Cats will often share a common dwelling, but their ability to form relationships depends upon genetics, early experience and an excess or the resources necessary to maintain survival.

A lack of food, water, safe resting places or places to eliminate will put pressure on the relationships within a group of cats.

A great deal can be gained by a full understanding of the normal behaviour of the cat and its functions, but this is well beyond the level of this primer.

The most commonly reported problems in the cat relate to house soiling.

There are clear steps in diagnosis:

- Rule out medical causes
- Determine whether the soiling has some communicative function (spraying or middening).
- Examine environmental factors that might cause or maintain the problem (inappropriate litter tray location, environmental stressors etc.)

Medical causes should be ruled out first; e.g. cystitis and colitis

Next it needs to be decided whether the cat is using urine or faeces as a social signal.

Spraying involves the cat sniffing a particular vertical surface and then reversing up to it with the tail held up. The tail will then twitch, and the cat deposits a small amount of urine. Cats can also spray onto horizontal surfaces.

'Middening' is where cats pass faeces in an obvious visible location as a signal.

Where there is no medical or social factor then the cat may simply be expressing a dislike for the litterbox design, contents or location.

A few facts about spraying:

- Entire toms will spray more frequently, especially when an in oestrus queen is in the area. Also their spray will smell a lot stronger than that of neutered males. But male cats that have been neutered have a reduced number of glands in their face and flanks so they may find it harder to leave a convincing scent mark simply by rubbing their face or body along things. They may then use spraying as an emergency method of scent marking where they formerly would rub.
- Both male and female cats will spray.
- Spraying is part of the cat's normal behaviour for defining territory.
- Urine marks may enable different cats to share use of the same place.
- Spraying usually involves leaving small amounts of urine against vertical surfaces, but it can also be done onto the floor.

A few specific reasons for spraying:

- If introduced to somewhere or something new then cats may find it hard to quickly establish a proper profile of scent marks and may resort to spraying as an emergency measure. New furniture, new carpets or a new home can all increase spraying
- Cats will also spray when there is a potential infringement of territory by an intruder cat.
- The frequency of spraying often increases whenever several cats share a house, regardless of their relationship.
- They often spray more when resources such as food, places to toilet and sleep are in shorter supply than the cats feel is compatible with the number of cats in the house (i.e. relative overpopulation)

The basic methods for reducing spraying assume that specific causes for the spraying have been dealt with. All sorts of other methods may be needed to help remedy the problem.

All treatment of spraying should involve the following:

- Proper cleaning of the places where the cats have sprayed.
- Artificially creating some replacement scent marks using a cloth rubbed on the cats and spraying certain spots with Feliway®.
- Altering the sites where the cats have sprayed so that they don't want to spray there again.
- Providing places to claw.
- Creating a clearly defined boundary to the territory the cats use.

Cleaning:

The most important thing is to avoid cleaners that contain strong odours, bleach or ammonia compounds. All of these may actually attract the cats back to spray at the same place again.

The aim is to remove the smell and give the cat no reason to come back there again.

Clean any sprayed location with a solution of washing powder or liquid.

It doesn't matter whether you use bio or non-bio, but there are a few considerations:

Bio is much better at removing smells but it has to be cleaned off the fabric/carpet by rinsing, otherwise it can damage it. It also breaks down the cat pheromones in Feliway so you need to wait 24-48 hours before applying this to anything cleaned with a bio powder.

Therefore bio may be best for things that can go in the washing machine and surfaces that you can clean easily (painted surfaces etc), and non-bio for fabric that is delicate or non-removable.

Always test these cleaning methods on a sample of the material first.

Put any material that can be removed through the washing machine; this will be enough to get it clean.

To clean individual spots where cats have sprayed the best routine is as follows:

Clean the place with a weak washing powder solution (1:10 dilution of washing liquid works well), and then rinse with clean water.

Allow to dry, and leave for the appropriate amount of time (up to 48 hours if you are going to apply Feliway after a bio washing powder).

Use a plant sprayer filled with surgical spirit to mist over the surface and then wipe clean to remove any oily parts of the cats' marking chemicals.

Then rub the area with your grooming cloth and finally give a single squirt of Feliway.

An additional way to avoid the delay between cleaning and applying Feliway is to wash the area and stick a piece of Clingfilm over it. Then apply the Feliway to the film.

24-48 hours later you can take the film down and go back to marking the surface directly with the Feliway.

Creating artificial scent marks.

You can do this by using two methods.

Firstly get a clean cloth and mark one side of it so you know that this cloth is just to be used for cat rubbing. Once daily rub all cats in the household with the same side of the cloth, paying particular attention to the area around the, mouth and chin as well as the flanks.

If they get keen to rub against the cloth with their faces then all the better!

Don't let the cats claw the cloth and don't clean their feet with it because the pheromones on cat's feet do not help with the kind of use we are putting the cloth to.

Then use this cloth to wipe around the general area that the cats currently have access to once a day.

Rub all around the walls up to about 18 inches off the ground paying particular attention to bits of furniture and ornaments which the cats have formerly sprayed and obvious vertical surfaces that may attract them (such as cupboard doors).

It can help to transfer the odours from the cloth if you give it a single squirt of Feliway before you go around rubbing the house.

This process should not take you long so don't overdo it!

The second method is to use Feliway to mark individual spots where the cats have formerly sprayed.

If these places have been recently urine marked then you need to clean them first, but then you should regularly go around and put a single squirt onto the location of the spraying once a day. This should be done daily for one month or until the cats are seen to be regularly rubbing against these areas.

You should create a list of all of the places the cat has tended to spray during the last six months and these are the places where you should apply Feliway. Or alternatively mark each place with a small piece of sticky backed paper. Obviously you don't need to spray a place if the cats don't actually go into that room; only treat the places where they currently go.

The important thing with Feliway is that the chemicals in the spray are delicate.

Don't use them where you have cleaned until at least 24 hours afterwards.

This is why it is best to use plastic or foil as a barrier (see below) so that you can clean and then put plastic over the top and spray that instead.

(Feliway can only be used to help treat problems of scent marking. It will not help with house-training problems.)

Altering sites so that the cats are put off spraying (and to protect your home!)

For this you will need some cling film, double sided sticky tape and some small squares of cardboard with bits of dried food glued onto it (use UHU glue or Copydex).

There will be places that you know the cats really prefer to spray.

There are also places that they have only sprayed occasionally but you really don't want to take the risk of then using these areas again.

Both of these kinds of places should be altered so that the cats don't want to spray there.

- Put down a L shape of Clingfilm which goes up the vertical and across the floor (up as high as 2', and about 1' across the floor); if the cats do spray then it will not go onto fabric or carpet underneath and the film will protect your property. It also makes it easy for you to tell that the cats have sprayed somewhere.
- Stick some strips of double-sided sticky tape on the floor in front of the place where the cats have sprayed; you can put this onto the Clingfilm. Cats hate things that stick to their feet and will often avoid places that have been treated like this.
- Put the cardboard squares down on front on the place where the spraying has happened. Cats rarely spray near their own food.
- Treat this site with a single spray of Feliway every day onto the Clingfilm at cat head height.

You can use any or all of these methods together depending upon how keen the cats are to spray and how desperate you are to keep them away from a particular place.

As a basic method use the cling film, the food and Feliway. If spraying is still occurring then sticky tape might be useful.

These methods are cheap, easy to put in place and easy to clean.

If spraying occurs then you should remove the Clingfilm or foil and replace it with a fresh strip.

Give the new strip a squirt of Feliway each day as before.

The cardboard squares are particularly useful because you can put lots down and still be able to put them away if guests come.

Places to claw.

It is wise to give cats somewhere to claw since this is another necessary form of marking behaviour for cats.

Most cats like to claw and stretch on horizontal surfaces and to have a good scratch on vertical ones as well, so you need to provide for both.

You can make a scratching place out of an old bit of carpet, and scratch the surface with a wire brush or comb so that there are fake claw marks. Marking a few stripes with a marker pen can make the surface more appealing to scratch. Then place the scratch place *exactly* where the cats usually claw by choice.

Hiding a scratch post in a corner will not work; the cats will simply ignore it and carry on scratching where they want to.

Once the cats have been clawing on the scratch place for a couple of weeks you can gradually start to move it to somewhere more convenient for yourself. Move it at about 1-2 inches per day until it is in the place that you want it.

This works because when the cats scratch they leave a scent mark from their feet that attracts them back to the same place again.

By moving the scratch post gradually the cats get used to a different location whilst keeping the other signals such as odour and texture of the scratch site.

Altering the rooms.

Cats like to have plenty of places to hide, eat and rest.

It is always a good idea to put down some temporary hiding/resting places such as cardboard boxes on their sides or access to shelves so they can get up high.

This enables the cats to make choices about where they want to be and some can be removed again once they are not spraying.

Likewise it helps to have food, water and places to eliminate available in several different locations.

Cats prefer to urinate and defecate in different places, so they need one litter tray per cat + one extra.

Keep the trays clean and find out which litter the cats prefer.

Deep-sided trays are often the best.

This creates an environment in which opportunities to feed, drink and eliminate are plentiful and the reasons to spray are reduced.

Cats also issue most of their threats to each other through eye contact.

Many cats will spray near windows or close to 'see-through' cat flaps where they often see other cats outside. This can happen even if the cat is a long way away.

The solution is to put up a barrier so the cats cannot see and threaten each other; use cardboard until you are sure that this is part of the problem. Then you can get plastic film which creates a 'frosted glass' effect or a curtain that covers only the bottom ½ or ¼ of the window.

Obviously you don't use these to block the whole window, just a strip at the bottom of the window up to just above cat head height. See-through cat flaps are best taped or painted over.

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