

TO YOUR

Pet's

Health

Anxiety...IT ISN'T JUST A HUMAN THING!

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I don't know about you, but for me the last several months have been wrought with stress and no small amount of anxiety! The unknowns of the Covid-19 pandemic have been a roller coaster ride, to say the least! Did you know that our pets can have anxiety as well? In this article, we will discuss some of the physical signs of anxiety in dogs and begin the discussion about a few of the different types of anxiety dogs can have.

Anxiety is the body's natural response to anticipation of future danger. That is why it is so important to socialize your new puppy. Socialization means exposing them to as many new and varied situations (perceived dangers) as possible. Experts believe the most important time for this exposure is between 12 and 16 weeks of age. Puppies need to have as many positive experiences with as many new and different people, places, sights and sounds as possible. These positive experiences will help them develop into independent dogs that do not react to new situations with fear.

Some of the physical signs of anxiety in a dog are trembling, lip licking or tongue flicking, physical tension with a tucked tail or flattened ears, yawning, rolling, pacing, panting, crying/whining/vocalizing, aggressiveness, trying to get away, increased drooling, decreased appetite, or self-trauma/overgrooming. Each of these signs by themselves may have other medical causes. If you are noticing that these signs are recurring in your dog, try to make a log of the signs you see and in what situations or circumstances they are occurring.

Several of these signs can occur with different medical conditions, so it is important that the dog be examined by your vet. If it is determined that there is no medical reason for the signs, then your vet may be able to

help you decide what is causing the dog's anxiety and possibly come up with some ways to minimize the reactions.

Two of the most common anxieties in dogs are storm/noise phobia and separation anxiety. Storm/noise phobia usually starts as a fear of any loud noise but can become more specific to thunderstorms or fireworks. Last month's article touched briefly on noise phobia caused by fireworks and some of the things that can be done to help your pet cope.

In Kansas, thunderstorms can be a lot less predictable than the fireworks season. However, always remember it is easier to try to prevent a dog's anxiety from building up, than to try to get her calmed back down. So, if a thunderstorm is predicted for the day, start preparing ahead of the storm. Some suggestions to try with noise phobias are to find an interior or basement room where a lot of the exterior sound is muffled, provide a quiet or safe place for the dog, turn on music, the TV or some other source of white noise or provide the dog with a distraction, such as a puzzle treat. There are dog shirts/ garments that are specially made for storm phobias, as well as dog appeasing pheromones that come as sprays or diffusers. If your dog is still extremely terrified despite trying these different measures, your vet may have some suggestions of medications to try.

Remember that anxieties are a dog's fear of the unknown and are equivalent to a human having a panic attack. We have touched very briefly on some of the signs and a few suggestions to start helping the dog cope with its fear. However, always remember your vet is the best source of information on any anxiety. Stay tuned next month for more on separation anxiety.



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