



# Preventing boredom for dogs...

## The basic problem

The problems caused by bored dogs can be varied, they can become introverted and listless, possibly putting on weight and showing no signs of interest in anything.

Boredom can lead to them becoming destructive or aggressive and can make them bark and howl continuously when left alone.

Either way, a bored dog is an unhappy dog and just like people who are unhappy, they will do things you wouldn't expect because they are bored and may be mentally depressed.

Just like people a dog needs a purpose and a reason to live. A dog's reasons to live are mainly to eat, hunt and play.

Recreating some experience of these for a reasonable period every day, you should have a dog that is fairly content with it's life and therefore has no need to rebel.

If you do have a bored dog, please find a solution and don't simply confine them to a crate while you're out.

## Keeping them stimulated

Make sure you give them several things to 'look forward to' each and every day. Never leave your dog alone for longer than a couple of hours without having taken them out or leaving them some form of stimulation or play.

Make feeding time something to look forward to by feeding them at a set time. If they leave any food take it up and give it to them at the next feeding time.

If they aren't interested in their food, then try finding some they are stimulated by.

It is sometimes sufficient to flavour their food with human food - gravy, soup and the juice from baked beans are usually successful.

Be sure to feed them a good quality dog food and don't simply sacrifice nutrition for taste.

Make sure they get a stimulating run every day, even in the bitterest winter.

It is not enough to take them for a short walk on a lead for 5 minutes. They need to be free to investigate and play for at least 20 minutes every day.

If your dog is energetic, it's worth joining a club that exercises them. There are walking clubs, dog training clubs, agility and flyball clubs, and many more, that will provide stimulation for both of you.

## Leaving them at home

When you go out and leave them, make sure they have something to occupy them. Smoked bones, food dispensing toys, and squeaky toys can be effective.

Ensure you give them some attention and a play time when you are in, so that they appreciate they can have attention and play but that they have to wait for it.

An excellent way to keep your dog stimulated at home is to throw a handful of tasty treats (complete dog or cat food is good), into the garden for them to find.

Alternatively you can hide treats around a room. As most dogs have a strong scavenging instinct, this usually keeps them very happy for 30 to 60 minutes.

Boredom in dogs is a common problem but one which is difficult to detect because they can't communicate their boredom to us.

It is a very simple problem to overcome if you just consider the few basic needs of your pet. Remember all animals need a reason to exist, dogs are no different to the rest of us.