



# Separation problems with dogs...

## Reasons for separation issues

Many dogs don't like to be separated from their owners, this can be for many reasons but usually it is because the dogs are bored, have a lack of self confidence or feel they need to be with their owners at all times.

In general there are three things you need to do to solve separation problems - 1: Increase the dogs confidence. 2: Build up the time they can be left for. 3: Make sure they have something to do when they are left.

## Increasing confidence

To increase the dogs confidence make sure that they are never told off for anything at all and start using a positive reward based system to teach them basic commands.

Our booklet, *There must be an easier way* . will help. Remember this isn't about obedience, it is about building self confidence, so make sure that all schooling is repeated as often as possible and kept short and very light-hearted.

If they follow you round the house all the time then have some 'no-go' areas, like the bathroom or kitchen, so they aren't allowed to follow you everywhere. If they whine when you go to these rooms just ignore it, even when you go back to them.

If they are attention seekers, then they must learn that they can't get attention exactly when they want it. If they jump up, paw or demand attention in any other way then just ignore them totally. Don't look at, touch or talk to them until they have given up.

Once they have given up then leave them for 3 - 4 minutes before calling them over and rewarding them quietly with a treat for being quiet.

Start to build up the time that they are left, by leaving them in another room for 1 minute every

hour.

During this time, it is vital that you ignore them totally. Once the time is up, let them out and welcome them quietly, as if you had just come home. Remember to use the ignoring procedure described above, if they jump up or otherwise demand attention.

Gradually build up the period by a minute each time, until you can leave them for 15 minutes every hour. Once you can do this then continue up to 30 minutes but every 2 hours.

Don't increment the time until they can stay alone happily for the current time. It will help if you leave the house completely once you get near to 15 minutes.

## When you are leaving

When you leave them, do the same things as if you were going out. Leave them with a food toy or bone, say a quick and calm goodbye and just walk away. Ignore any cries or barking, as they have to believe that they cannot make you come back. It may help to read our leaflet on boredom, for ideas on things to leave them with.

Confinement doesn't teach anything  
Many people recommend leaving dogs in crates whilst you are out. This doesn't solve many problems and only imprisons the dog, so we don't agree with this practise.

Leaving them in one room should be fine. We would strongly suggest that no dog should be left alone for more than 3-4 hours each day.

## Still got a problem?

If your dog still has a problem with being left then you should consult a behaviourist as there are many other reasons for separation problems, which we cannot cover here and often need careful assessment.