

SCOTCH PINES DOG TRAINING

Specializing in Off-Leash Obedience



SEPARATION ANXIETY

Summary of the Opinions of Jan Fennell, Renowned Dog Trainer from the UK

Jan Fennell believes that Separation Anxiety stems from a lack of clear alpha roles in the “pack” which cause extreme insecurity. She recommends a series of steps to be done, but the most important step to remedy Separation Anxiety is for the alpha humans (including children) to come and go without saying a WORD, or acknowledging the dog, in any way. This is especially important when returning from any absence. The humans should completely ignore the dog. If the dog jumps, turn your back. If the dog is crated, do not acknowledge the dog at all or let him/her out. Wait until the dog settles down voluntarily and preferably does the big “sigh” (exhalation) that I am sure you are all familiar with. Then, and only then, call the dog calmly to you for affection.

Most humans make a big fuss over the dog, after an absence, and we use a high pitched, excited voice. Basically, we are responding to the big fuss our dogs make over us! We humans handle excitement in a very different way than dogs do. Some dogs can interpret our excited response as upsetting. Imagine how a small child feels when parents fight or otherwise get loud. This is similar to how some dogs feel with high pitched, excited, loud voices. The more a dog suffers from Separation Anxiety, the more calm the humans must be.

Admittedly, being calm is EXTREMELY difficult for humans to do. However, if done consistently, it will help the dog feel calm and secure, instead of anxious or nervous. It is especially effective if paired with eating first-- that is, putting crackers or nuts or something like that in the dog's bowl, calmly eating out of it for a minute or two— BEFORE feeding your dog. The purpose of this is to establish yourself as a calm, assertive pack leader, who controls everything including the source of food and WHEN the other pack members eat.

The pack alpha also comes and goes as they please (observed in both wolf and wild dog packs). Also, games and affection should both be initiated and ended BY THE HUMAN and not by the dog. Our dogs may be “domesticated” but they are still dogs, and that domestication is only once removed from wildness. We tend to treat our dogs more like human children than like dogs—but they are NOT children. This isn't any judgment on worth, but rather an observation about the differences between species. All dogs do best when alpha roles and pack order is consistent and stable. Please contact your trainer with any additional questions or concerns.

