

Ask the vet logo

Local Veterinary Surgeon Dan Flynn from Balmoral and Commons Brae Vets is back to answer your questions about problem pet issues. If you have a question you'd like the vet to write about send it to askdanthevet@gmail.com

Q. I have a puppy now 4 months old, and he cannot be left alone, my the house is ruined, and also keeps us awake at night. Help! What can I do?

A. This is a case of separation anxiety, which is a behavioural problem of the dog, however it can become a household problem very quickly. This is one of the most common reasons why dogs are re-homed. Even with a young puppy of 4 months of age, it can be difficult to turn this around. You will need with good advice and assistance. Here are some ideas that may help.

- The puppy may have become dependant on your company ,you must try and wean him off your company, slowly, out over a period of time. It may be advised to get the help of a behavioural expert, where a fixed plan is put in place to help you achieve this.
- Prevention of boredom when the puppy is left alone is a crucial step. A Kong is a plastic toy that we can put food into and getting the food out of it is a welcome distraction. It can be frozen and will therefore last a little longer.
- There are plug in diffusers that release a comforting pheromone, similar to that of the lactating bitch. These are also available in collars that last for 4 weeks and can be useful to reduce stress. These tools are also useful for dogs when the fireworks start in October
- More regular exercise may be required for your pet. If you have a busy lifestlye and only are getting one walk a day, there are now plenty of dog walking services locally. They will come a pick your dog up and take them to the park for a run with their buddies.
- We can prescribe a course of anti anxiety tablets to help when trying to change this behaviour. This may only be a temporary measure.

Unfortunately a lot of dogs get a fright early in life and it stays with them for life. For this reason we encourage proper socialisation and habituation of puppies, from as early as possible. I mean from as early as 4-8 weeks. This is the reason that you should only buy from reliable breeders who know about the importance of early socialisation. You must always see the bitch and puppies in-situ. Check out their environment, their condition and ask plenty of questions. If the puppies have been exposed to as many possible situations, noises and people as possible in the first few weeks of life they are less likely to react in a negative way to these situations, noises and people later in life.

