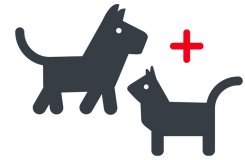


# Separation Anxiety



**Maggie's  
Rescue**

## What is it ?

Separation Anxiety is more suitably termed “separation distress” or “separation panic”.

Separation Anxiety Disorder is a condition in which a dog becomes fearful and nervous when left at home alone or are physically separated from a member of the family. Separation Distress is also a huge contributing factor to the surrender and relinquishment of dogs in our society.

Dogs that suffer from Separation Distress may react differently - some may panic as soon as their owner leaves the house, some may start to look distressed as soon as the owner picks up their keys to leave for the day. Some may become distressed and panic the longer they are left, some may panic initially but may be able to self-calm to a certain extent.

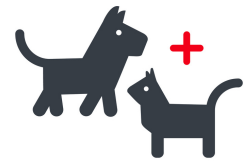
## Some common signs of Separation Distress may include:

- Vocalisation: barking, whining, howling, etc.
- Destructive behaviours: chewing, ripping, tearing, etc.
- Panting
- Pacing
- Urination/defecation
- Freezing/refusing to move
- Trembling/shaking
- Trying to escape
- Digging
- Plus, more...

Separation Anxiety/Distress is NOT a result of dog training. It is usually caused by factors such as being left alone for the first time after being accustomed to constant human contact, past trauma, the loss of a family member or animal sibling, or a change in environment/routine.

Trainers are important in the treatment of Separation Distress and can be involved by working with a vet, to help implement the behaviour modification program.

# Separation Distress



**Maggie's  
Rescue**

## Options for a dog with Separation Distress

- Leaving anxiety untreated
- Rehoming your dog
- Treatment by either:
  - Maggie's Rescue recommended dog behaviourist,
  - A vet who has further interest and education with behavioural medicine, or
  - A vet who has become a member or fellow of the Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists in Veterinary behaviour, by examination

We are non-judgmental and will work with you on the best treatment for your dog.

## Basic Treatments for Separation Distress:

### Pre-requisites prior to a consultation:

- Medical workup
- Detailed history
- Behavioural consultation
- Establish a diagnosis

### Treatment:

- +/- psychotropic medications
- Behaviour modification program
- Management Behaviour modification
- Follow-up consults/monitoring



## **Problem: My puppy won't toilet when taken outside but will toilet the minute they come back inside.**

### **Possible reasons:**

1. They may not have 'clicked' that outside is the appropriate place to toilet. Have patience!
2. Your puppy may be holding it in so that they can continue being outside with you because they have learned that as soon as they finish toileting, you go straight back inside again (playing outside is way more fun!)
3. Your puppy has been outside all day, and after coming home, you bring them inside before they have had the chance to toilet. Your puppy was likely asleep before you got home, then got excited and forgot to go to the toilet. When they go inside, they are busting to go!

### **Recommendation:**

When taking your puppy outside to toilet, you need to ignore them whilst you wait patiently until they do their business (be unresponsive – don't make eye contact or talk). When they finish, praise immediately and then have a play session. This way your pup starts to have fun AFTER they have toileted, rewarding their behaviour. When you arrive home, ensure that your puppy has toileted. BEFORE bringing them inside.

## **Problem: My puppy hides inside to go to the toilet (e.g. In a quiet room or behind the couch)**

### **Possible reasons:**

1. Your puppy is possibly scared to toilet in front of you as they may have been previously punished for it. Punishment can include verbal and/or physical reprimand
2. It just hasn't 'clicked' yet that toileting inside is not the appropriate place

### **Recommendation:**

This is a difficult situation because to help the toilet training process, your puppy needs to toilet in front of you so you can reward them immediately after. You may need to start rewarding your puppy for toileting anywhere (even if it is inside), so then you can start the toilet training process from the beginning.

## **Problem: My puppy urinates outside and then urinates immediately or soon after coming inside.**

### **Possible reasons:**

1. It may not have 'clicked' that outside is the appropriate place to toilet. Be patient with them
2. Your puppy hasn't 'emptied' completely while being outside, so they need to go again sooner than expected. If you reward them before they finish, start to walk off during your puppy's business, or if your puppy becomes distracted whilst toileting – the puppy can stop mid-stream and hasn't emptied completely

### **Recommendation:**

When your puppy finally goes to the toilet, you need to be really patient and wait there until they have finished – don't walk away, make eye contact, or talk – but make sure you praise them AFTER they have finished toileting. Then, have a play and go inside.

