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features

■ STRESS

Dealing with anxiety in dogs

Owners need to take time to socialize their new pet to ensure a successful adoption

Jessica D'Amico
Animal Talk



Adopting a dog is a rewarding and fulfilling experience for anyone looking to enrich their lives through the addition of a pet and who wants to provide a home and a family to an animal in need of both.

The comfort and stability of a safe home is monumental, especially if the dog has had a rough past. Unfortunately, many dogs acquire anxiety issues before or during their time spent in a shelter. It is wonderful to witness a positive change in animals with physical, behavioural or mental health issues.

Anxiety disorders in dogs can arise for many different reasons. These include short term moving experiences, long-term stressful or abusive environments, physical illness, chronic pain, or breed disposition. Whatever the cause, the disorder can pose difficulties in adopting and caring for a dog. To increase the likelihood of a successful adoption, there are several things you can do to help a dog with anxiety:

At a glance:

Signs of stress and anxiety in dogs:

- Panting.
 - Pacing.
 - Whining/whimpering.
 - Avoiding eye contact.
 - Shaking/trembling.
 - Fidgeting.
 - Hiding.
 - Trying to escape.
 - Yawning.
 - Lip licking.
 - Shutting down and avoiding interactions.
 - Urinating or defecating when stressed.
- For more information, visit <http://www.petmd.com/dog/slideshows/anxiety-disorders-dogs-symptoms-diagnosis-and-treatment>

Socialize the dog on his or her own terms. Exposing your dog to people and new situations can help with their behaviour, but remember to go at the right pace. Forcing a dog into an unfavourable situation can make them more anxious. Take your time, use your judgement and allow your dog to gain trust through positive experiences with new people and environments. Consult your veterinary clinic or animal shelter



JESSICA D'AMICO/SUBMITTED PHOTO

Chuchu the Chihuahua was found in a box in Montreal by the SPCA in November 2012 and adopted by Jessica a few days later. She had severe anxiety issues concerning meeting people and other animals, but with socialization and training has overcome some of that anxiety. She still has a phobia of thunderstorms and loud noises, which D.A.P and anti-anxiety dog chews helped to alleviate.



JESSICA D'AMICO/SUBMITTED PHOTO

Nala, the Pomeranian, was a puppy mill dog most of her life. Jessica adopted the 10-year-old canine in August 2012 when the Montreal SPCA seized the dogs. She acquired separation anxiety after quickly becoming attached to Jessica, but with training and time she has become less anxious when Jessica is not around.

for advice. There are many products made to help dogs with anxiety.

While some are effective, they mainly provide short-term solu-

tions and some may not be effective at all. The Thundershirt is helpful in some cases of separation anxiety and the use of the spray D.A.P. (Dog Appeas-

Happy adoption



GEMMA LUNDRIGAN/SUBMITTED PHOTO

Darcy the cat was adopted in March to Gemma Lundrigan and Cody Collins. Gemma says: "We adopted Darcy to be a friend for our new puppy, who was lonely. These two are now thick as thieves, cuddling and playing together around the house."

ing Pheromones) may help to alleviate stress in anxious dogs with travel or noise phobias. Additional products include dog chews containing ingredients

that may help to alleviate anxiety such as L-theanine, L-tryptophan, chamomile and some others.

See TRAINING, B6

■ ANIMALS

Training can ease stress in a dog

FROM B5

In extreme cases, the veterinarian may prescribe anti-anxiety medications. It is always a good idea to speak to a veterinarian or trainer regarding your particular dog before trying a product.

Take your dog to training classes. Basic training methods can go a long way towards providing stability for an anxious dog. Find a trainer that you trust and their assessment will let you know what specific methods may help your dog.

Be patient. Consistency and routine are very important. From learning to handle nail trims to approaching strangers, these changes take time and commitment.

Some things will improve, but

accept this possibility from the beginning. If you do not, you should reconsider your choices, because adopting an animal you aren't fully prepared to care for may lead to a worse situation for both you and the dog.

Jessica D'Amico is a second year student at the Atlantic Veterinary College. Animal Talk is a monthly column in The Guardian produced by the Companion Animal Welfare Initiative (CAWI), the goal of which is to improve the welfare of owned and un-owned companion animals on P.E.I. CAWI consists of the P.E.I. Humane Society, SpayAid, Cat Action Team, P.E.I. Veterinary Medical Association, P.E.I. department of agriculture and forestry, P.E.I. 4-H and the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre at AVC. For more information, see gov.pe.ca/agriculture/CAWI. Readers may send ques-

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