



## Mountainview Animal Hospital

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### SEPARATION ANXIETY IN PETS — another potential consequence of COVID 19?

COVID 19 has certainly had an impact on most of our lives. Most people are staying home more and some almost exclusively so. It was interesting to see how the initial lock down in the spring impacted our dogs and cats. The constant presence of their humans was appreciated by some and disliked by others. We had disrupted their routines, and that can be stressful. At some point, COVID will lessen its grip and many of us will return to our old routines. This will again have an impact on our pets and has the potential to create problems for some of our furry friends.

**Separation Anxiety** is like a panic attack that some dogs will experience when left alone. They may pant, pace, drool, whine, howl, bark, be destructive or urinate and defecate in the house. Separation anxiety is serious and can be quite damaging to the quality of life of both the pet and their families. Pets with separation anxiety need our help!



### Who is at risk for Separation Anxiety?

While it is almost impossible to predict which dogs will develop Separation Anxiety, there are some predisposing factors:

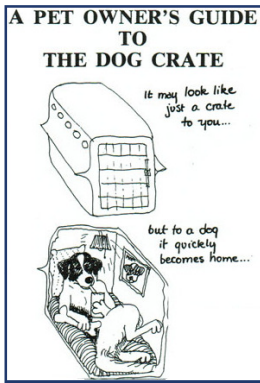
- Senior pets have a hard time adjusting to change.
- Newly adopted pets from shelters often struggle with Separation Anxiety.
- Pets with existing anxiety or behaviour issues.
- Changes in the home or schedule: a recent move, loss of a family member or another pet, schedule changes associated with vacations, school breaks, illness, stay at home orders.
- While puppies are not necessarily more prone to separation anxiety, they do provide an opportunity for a focus on prevention.



### How do you treat Separation Anxiety?

Treating Separation Anxiety can be tough and early intervention is important. If you suspect your dog has Separation Anxiety, the first step is to seek veterinary care; there are medical conditions that can mimic or contribute to Separation Anxiety. A video of your pet's behaviour when you leave the house can be very helpful in making the diagnosis. Treatment often requires a combination of medication and behaviour modification, and a large dose of patience.

1. **Medication:** A lot of pet owners are reluctant to use medication initially, but they can have a great impact on the treatment and the overall outcome. The purpose of medication is to lower their anxiety so they can learn to cope better alone. Initially, we often use a combination of a long-acting medication and a short-acting medication.
2. **Avoidance:** Until the medication has had time to work, avoid leaving your dog alone. You may have to involve the help of friends or family, dog sitters or take your dog with you. If you have to leave your dog alone, avoid coming and going, try grouping all your errands for one trip to avoid your dog experiencing you leave multiple times in a day.
3. **Use food:** Food triggers pleasurable chemical responses in the brain and acts as a distraction. Use Snuffle Mats, Kongs stuffed with fun food, West Paw Puzzles or others to reduce your dog's overall stress level.
4. **Exercise:** Exercise and play are great ways to give your dog mental stimulation and reduce physical tension. 20 to 30 minutes of exercise is recommended before you leave the house.



## CRATE TRAINING

Pick the right crate. Wire crates might be more convenient, but plastic crates are more enclosed and den like. Already have a wire crate? Cover it with a breathable sheet or table cloth to create a more cozy feel.

Purchase your crate for the adult size of your dog and block the back portion to adjust the size for the puppy.

Start training early in the day. Use food, treats and toys to encourage your puppy to go in and out.

Put your puppy in for nap times throughout the day.

Don't let the puppy out when whining or barking, that will only reinforce bad behaviour.

Be patient.

Never use the crate for punishment.

5. Create a safe place: Often this can be their crate or a room without outside windows and doors. Make it comfortable, encourage your dog to retreat there throughout the day for special treats and nap time. Classical music can be soothing and reduce the likelihood of them hearing stimulating outside noise.
6. Independence Exercises: Use food dispensing or puzzle toys to keep your dog busy before you leave the room. Teach your dog a "go to", down stay or settle command to be used to have your dog relax on their mat or bed. Once this is trained you slowly increase the distance between you and the mat and at times you may even practice leaving the room.
7. Never punish: Your dog's barking, destructive behaviour or house soiling is not done out of spite or anger. Your pet is anxious that you have left and will never come back. Punishment only makes their anxiety worse.
8. Planned Departure Technique: This is a method of systematically desensitizing your dog to the process of your departure. It acknowledges that your pet's anxiety often begins even before you leave the house and uses cues to slowly get your pet used to the idea of you leaving.

## How is Separation Anxiety Prevented?

As with most things, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. This is particularly important with all the new puppies people are adding to their families right now during COVID 19. We are all staying home so much more right now, but that might not be the case a few short months from now. Let's make sure our new pets will be able to cope once we go back to work, school (or my favourite) shopping.

- Start young: They are so cute we just want to cuddle them at all time but it is in their best interest that they learn to sleep on their own bed or in their crate and that they are comfortable with us in the other room. Teaching them to be comfortable with distance between you and to sleep independently will build confidence.
- We strongly recommend that all puppies be crate trained. This gives your pet a safe place to sleep.
- When in doubt, find out. Use your phone to record their behaviour when you leave the house.
- If your pet is anxious, the anxiety will only worsen with repeated experience of you leaving the house. Call us to put a plan in place as soon as you notice any panting, drooling, vocalizing, destructiveness or house-soiling when you are away.
- Mild or early signs might be treated with dog-appeasing pheromones. They come in plug-in diffusers and collars. Other natural supplements are also available and might have a calming effect. Feel free to discuss these types of products with us.
- Practice leaving your dog for short periods, and then gradually increase the length of time you are away from them. This can even be accomplished when you are in the house. Consider leaving your puppy in the crate for two hours while you work in another room. You can enjoy each others company during breaks.
- When anticipating a schedule change, gradually acclimate your pet to the new schedule. This would include adjusting the feeding, sleeping and walking times gradually from the old to the new expected schedule.
- Exercise calms the brain and relaxes the body. A good brisk walk or rigorous play 30 minutes before you leave is recommended.
- For older pets, make sure you are distinguishing anxiety from pain. Perhaps this would be a good time for a good physical examination by your veterinarian.
- Use the available resources in your neighbourhood for pet training, doggie daycare and dog walking.

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## The Bottom Line

### SOCIALIZING DOGS DURING COVID-19

It is so important to socialize our puppies to help them develop good manners and prevent anxiety. Here's a link to a great article: <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19/socializing-dogs-during-covid-19>



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## WHEN IT'S TIME TO SPAY OR NEUTER, WHAT LEVEL OF CARE SHOULD YOU EXPECT ON SURGERY DAY?

The spay (ovariohysterectomy) and neuter (castration) of your pet is considered part of responsible pet ownership in North America. So much so that we often don't think much about it or consider it a big deal. And yet, you are entrusting your pet to someone else's care for a fairly major surgery. That really is a big deal and you should have certain expectations of those you are trusting with your pet's care. This is what you can expect from Mountainview Animal Hospital:

### How is it ensured that a patient is healthy and fit for surgery?

- Pre-surgical consultation: On the morning of the surgery, all clients will meet with one of our Registered Veterinary Technician to review their pet's health, understand the surgery to be performed and discuss any concerns they may have.
- Complete pre-anesthetic examination: One of our doctors will perform a complete physical examination to ensure a healthy pet.
- Pre-anesthetic blood tests: We offer this to all patients and require it for some; its requirement is tailored to the patient's individual needs. Our in-clinic laboratory can analyze your pet's blood in less than 15 minutes. *Not included in the surgical price.*

### How is the anesthetic delivered?

- Pre-medication: We will give an injection of light sedation & pain medication to reduce patient anxiety and to decrease the amount of overall anesthetic required during surgery.
- Intubation: We place a breathing tube into the airway to deliver oxygen and anesthesia, and to ensure anesthetic safety.
- Inhalant: We use oxygen and an inhalant anesthetic to keep our patients at the right anesthetic level for surgery. This type of anesthetic may not be used on very short procedures like cat castrations.

### How are the patients monitored and their safety ensured?

- Continual patient monitoring: All patients are monitored during and after surgery by a Registered Veterinary Technician.
- Heart rate, oxygen levels, capnography and blood pressure: We measure and record these vital signs regularly throughout the anesthesia.
- Thermoregulation: We monitor body temperature and keep our patients warm through heating devices to ensure a safer anesthetic and recovery.
- Intravenous fluids: We use surgical intravenous fluids to maintain a healthy blood pressure, replace blood loss, and speed recovery. We start the fluids before the surgery and maintain them for a few hours after surgery to ensure our patients are well hydrated.

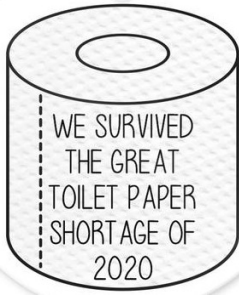
### How is the patient's comfort and pain control ensured?

- Pain prevention protocol: We use a combination of anti-inflammatory and narcotic pain medication before and after surgery to ensure a comfortable and pain free recovery.
- Nerve blocks: We infuse local anesthetic at the surgery site to prevent the pain signal from ever being generated.
- Take home pain medication: We recognize that our care for your pet does not end when they go home. To ensure a comfortable and pain free recovery at home, we will send your pet home with an anti-inflammatory medication.
- Hospitalization: We recover patients in their own comfortable and warm kennels centrally located in the hospital for observation.
- Continued patient monitoring: After surgery, our Registered Veterinary Technician continues to ensure the patient is warm, comfortable and pain free.
- Nail trim: We like to do a little pampering.

### How is it ensured the patient is continuing to recover well at home?

- Discharge consultation: We will take the time to explain your pet's home care needs and answer any of your questions.
  - Follow up telephone call: We will contact you a few days after the surgery to ensure your pet is recovering comfortably.
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**The Bottom  
Line**



**EMERGENCY  
VETERINARY  
CLINIC**

The Emergency Veterinary Clinic (EVC) on HWY 10 in Brampton is the only clinic in this area we recommend for after hours care for your pet. It was designed as an extension of your family veterinarian. When we are closed, they are open, so your pet is never without veterinary care.

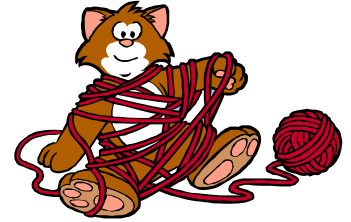
The EVC is the only clinic that will send us a copy of your pet's medical records automatically upon discharge, so we can follow up with you. This level of continuity of care is important for ongoing wellbeing of your furry friend.

**TIME WITH TUX**

Humans never cease to baffle me. All of a sudden everyone around here is acting strange. They are all standing far away from each other or behind these weird plastic cages, and they are spraying everything, with this alcohol smelling stuff. They are even putting that stuff on their hands or washing them over and over again; I have never seen so much hand washing before. I don't get it!

To make matters worse, they are all wearing masks on their faces. It looks so ridiculous. And it seems so impractical. How is anyone supposed to know who each other is if they can't smell each others butts?

Pfff. They had better not try to put one of those masks on me!



**A NOTE OF GRATITUDE**

The pandemic has certainly been an interesting experience for all of us at the least, and a tragedy for some. So much of what we have taken for granted has changed. Some of it we can already laugh about, like the great toilet paper shortage of 2020; other things still frustrate us.

Here at Mountainview Animal Hospital, we have been frustrated by some pet food shortages. Early on it was associated with hoarding of pet food and manufacturing challenges as shut downs and staff shortages caused everything to backlog. Unfortunately, we are still experiencing challenges with certain foods. We know this is frustrating and apologize for any inconvenience. We would also like to express our gratitude. We have great clients who have been abundantly patient and understanding. Thank you.

I would also like to thank the ladies at Mountainview Animal Hospital in reception and the RVT's who do the ordering and manage our webstore. They have done an outstanding job of managing our inventory to minimize any impact manufacturer shortages have had on our clients and pets. Ladies, I could not do it without you. Thank you.

**HOLIDAY HOURS**



Dec. 24th – Christmas Eve: Open 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Dec. 25th – Christmas Day: Closed

Dec. 26th – Saturday: Closed

Dec. 31st – New Years Eve: Open 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Jan 1st – New Years Day: Closed

Unless otherwise specified here, Mountainview Animal Hospital will be open during its regular office hours. Animals in the hospital over the holidays will receive the same great care and attention as always. For those patients requiring emergency care over Christmas and New Years, the Emergency Veterinary Clinic on Hwy 10 will be open to serve your pet's medical and surgical needs. You can call ahead at 905-495-9907 or go directly there. The Emergency Veterinary Clinic is located on the south east corner of Highway 10 and Wexford Rd, just one block north of Bovaird (Hwy 7).

*From all of us at Mountainview Animal Hospital,  
we wish all of you A Merry Christmas,  
A Joyous Holiday Season and  
A Happy New Year*

