



# THE BARRACKS VET SURGERY MOSMAN

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## ANXIOUS DOGS

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### **Separation Anxiety**

If a dog is removed from his litter too early, he may miss certain life lessons from his mother, such as how to calm himself. Additionally if a pup is not exposed to a variety of stimuli such as trucks, skateboards, thunder, shops, crowds, other animals and a variety of people before the crucial age of 16 weeks, these may well cause intense stress at a later age. Many people react in a worried way when their dog is upset, and this reinforces the dog's concern.

If your dog whines or barks when separated from you, here is a great way to instill confidence and create calm quiet behavior.

### **The calming exercise**

Shorten your dog's leash to 30cm and tie it to a fixed spot, like a sturdy table leg. Then simply sit beside your dog. If he panics or struggles, gently place him in the sitting position. When he calms, move a few feet away, and sit down again. If he struggles to reach you, he will observe that you are calm and not reacting. When he is calm you can move a little further away. Eventually you can move out of his sight for short periods.

When you return to him, give him some praise and a treat or two, but don't overdo it. He should learn that it is normal to be separated, and that nothing bad will happen to him. This will take quite a few sessions to sink in, so don't be discouraged if you don't see the desired result immediately. Tether him in many different places around your home as you practice, and eventually he will be fine at a café or any other environment. It is important that you never undo the leash to set him free until he has been calm for at least ten seconds.

By gentle and ongoing daily exposure to the short lead, he will learn to cope with any feelings of worry and frustration. There will be a flow on effect to his personality in general. He will become welcome around other people and his life will be much more enjoyable!

### **Medication**

In challenging situations, training can be assisted with calming devices such as D.A.P. and Adaptil or Homeopet Anti-anxiety drops, which can simply be added to the water bowl. For more severe or short term situations, the Vet may recommend medications such as Valium or ACP.