

Dealing with Separation Anxiety

Separation anxiety is a common problem with Weimaraners that can have many precluding factors, including but not limited to genetics, litter rearing, dominance, submission and boredom or stress. The causes of separation anxiety are not nearly as important as is the need to overcome the behavioral manifestations of the condition. Below is an ever-growing inventory of suggestions on dealing with these behaviors.

The safest confinement methods must be used to prevent the dog from seriously injuring itself or doing severe property damage, often in the thousands of dollars. The crate should become a ritual part of the pet's day, consistently use the crate at scheduled times and often when you are home. If the crate is not an integral part of the dog's day, the crate will soon become associated with separation. A strong crate of the correct size is an important factor in helping anxiety prone dogs. Invest in a quality crate with sturdy welds; sometimes even a high-quality plastic or wire crate may need further fortification depending on the dog, and there are various methods for reinforcing both types. Many pets prefer the plastic kennels to the wire, as they afford a greater sense of security. In selecting a kennel, the height should measure taller than the dog can arch his back, and make certain you feel no give when you try to shake the door; the dog will frantically attempt escape through areas it can feel move.

Position the crate in either the activity center of the home, the owner's bedroom, or even have one in each area. The dog should not feel isolated, if you wouldn't go there to sit and read a book, your Weim doesn't want to be there either. Only treats used in training should be given outside the kennel, all other feeding, including regular daily meals and especially all extra treats are given within the crate. When kenneling the dog, use a specific command in a quiet, firm, authoritative voice; if you say "Aww, come on, you gotta get into your bed now..." the dog will become reluctant and refuse to go in his crate, as you sound as if you don't really want him in there at all. If the dog won't enter the crate willingly physically put him into the crate without any delay or coaxing.

When you prepare to leave home, crate him for at least 15 minutes before you go, and after completing at least three ritual behaviors. The dog goes outside, comes in, does a short down stay, gets a treat for the correct behavior, and is then kenneled. He should be left in the crate for five to ten minutes after you return home, and you've had time to observe three ritual behaviors, take off your shoes, listen to messages, and pour a glass of wine, for example. Ignore

all unwanted behaviors he exhibits in his crate as he was invisible and you were deaf. Then, if the dog is not barking, he is allowed out of his cage; at the start of training a treat can be given to quiet him. He should then be ignored for two full minutes; if he refuses to be ignored and doesn't remain composed, put the dog on a leash and stand on it where it hits the ground to limit his actions. Invest in a chain leash should the dog try to chew on it to get your attention.

Never clean the kennel of his saliva or waste in his presence, as you will seem submissive. For bedding, use cheap blankets cut into quarters; if the dog destroys the blanket, little is lost. The dog should always have a blanket in his crate, even if he destroys it every day. The only exception is if the dog actually will ingest the blanket.

Try to wear the dog out physically and mentally before he is to be left alone; a 15-minute walk or out to go potty is not nearly enough. At least 20 minutes of real exercising or running, along with a 10-minute obedience drill works wonders on the dog's attitude before you leave.

Weimaraners are very intelligent dogs and need outlets for their capabilities. Enroll him in some type of classes, or give him a hobby: such as obedience, agility, hunting or therapy dog work. If Weims don't have mental stimulation, they get overly fixated on their owners, often in such an unhealthy way as to create separation anxiety. Many of these dogs can benefit from doggie day care.

When the dog is to be left alone in his kennel, several things can be done that may help thwart anxiety. You can put on your shoes and coat out of sight of the dog. Go out a door where the dog isn't sure if you actually left. Try playing a radio or covering the crate with a blanket. Give the dog a Kong toy frozen with peanut butter or cheese whiz for a pacifier. Sometimes herbal remedies, flower essences, homeopathic, or even using prescription medications such as Clomicalm may help reduce the anxiety level.

Many Weims have personality traits common to dogs suffering from separation anxiety; often it is an issue of owner management as to degree. When your dog knows what to expect from you and what your expectations of him are, he will have the greatest security, and at the same time unwanted behaviors are depleted.

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