



CHANTRY VETS

A Passion for Pets and their People



ALVERTHORPE · WAKEFIELD · OUTWOOD · OSSETT · MIDDLETON · NORMANTON · CASTLEFORD · PONTEFRACT · HEMSWORTH · FEATHERSTONE

Destructive Behaviour

When the owners are at home

Attention Seeking: If dogs are destroying the house when the owner is at home it is likely to be because the dog is seeking attention, possibly to initiate play.

Exploratory behaviour: Dogs explore objects with their mouths as we would do with our hands. Sometimes dog destruction is simply a case of investigation. The best way to prevent these behaviours is to give the dog another object it can divert its attention to, such as a Kong or activity ball. When the dog is chewing the desired object, give it lots of praise and encourage the dog to use it, you are therefore giving the dog small amounts of the attention it desires and will increase the chances of it opting for that object in the future. Do not punish the dog. This can lead to anxiety problems or can encourage attention seeking behaviour (attention good or bad is still attention).

When owners are away:

Phobia: Destructive behaviour may occur due to phobia from loud noises. The problem begins when the animal cannot escape from noise threat because their usual escape route is blocked, unavailable or they are confined to the room with the sound they fear.

Sometimes just taking the animal outdoors is enough, however if the animal continues to panic, it may not calm down until it is completely moved away from the sound.

Opportunistic destruction: Dogs explore objects with their mouths and as they are growing up they often enjoy tearing up and destroying objects especially if they are new and smell different. For these dogs activity toys such as Kongs and puzzle feeders which are only available when the owner is away, can really help. Make sure some of the toys available are a material which can be chewed as dogs like to be able to actually destroy the object, if it is indestructible they may move onto something else. A variety of Kong toys are available from all branches of Chantry Vets, these provide safe and interesting toys for all dog breeds.

Often young dogs will chew up their new beds. Replacing the bed, or attempting to replace it with a harder material, will not work and only encourages the behaviour. This is because dogs explore with their mouths, introducing a new object and new smell will cause the dog to investigate and



CHANTRY VETS

A Passion for Pets and their People



ALVERTHORPE · WAKEFIELD · OUTWOOD · OSSETT · MIDDLETON · NORMANTON · CASTLEFORD · PONTEFRACT · HEMSWORTH · FEATHERSTONE

therefore chew it up repeatedly. It may be more appropriate to leave the chewed up bed until the dog is no longer interested. If the damage is too severe for this, try using a mat or similar item that is less easy to destroy.

Anxiety: Sometimes owners will punish their dog when returning home to find destruction. This can cause opportunistic destruction to develop into anxiety based destruction, due to the dog seeking ways to help it feel relaxed through oral displacement.

The dog will perform this behaviour in fear of the owners return, as the dog will associate the owners return with punishment.

When you return home to find your dog acting submissive, rolling over or with its head down averting your gaze, it is often assumed the dog is feeling 'guilty'. However this is not the case. Too much time has elapsed between the dog performing the destructive behaviour and the punishment, so therefore the dog cannot make the association between the two. From the dogs perspective whenever you return home it gets punished, but he/she has no idea why. It therefore performs submissive behaviours that appear like 'guilt' to try and prevent the owner being dominant and punishing.

Further punishment of the dog will only cause the anxiety to increase and the undesired behaviour to escalate.

Socialisation: Some dogs simply do not respond well to being left alone. This could be due to inadequate socialisation as a puppy as they were constantly comforted by the mother or people. Dogs are social animals and therefore a single-housed dog may feel more isolated when left alone all day than those in multi-dog households.

These dogs need to be habituated to being on their own. They should be left for a short time (just a few minutes) many times a day, only long enough so they are not showing any signs of panic or distress. This should be performed throughout several weeks and your dog should learn quite quickly that being on its own is not scary. Eventually you may start leaving the dog for longer periods.

Note: The material and structure of the object destroyed can be a useful way to understand the cause of the behaviour. If the behaviour is not attention seeking, then the dog may appear to destroy a range of objects.