

Does your pet have an anxiety problem or training problem?

Why is it important to determine the difference?

So the owner can be referred to the appropriate professional for help – e.g. Veterinary behaviourist, dog trainer, or obedience club.

Anxiety problems:

Pets with anxiety disorders display behaviours that are either:

- Abnormal or irrational
- Normal but are excessive in intensity, or occur in inappropriate circumstances
- Disruptive to the household
- Generally detrimental to the health and welfare of the pet, you or the community.

Facts about anxiety:

- Recent studies have shown that 1 in 5 dogs and cats have an anxiety disorder.
- Anxiety is a **welfare issue** – mental illness is an extremely unpleasant experience.
- Anxiety is a **medical** problem, **not** a training problem.
 - Animals with anxiety disorders have an imbalance in the neurochemicals in the brain.
- Animals with anxiety problems rarely 'grow out of them', but generally tend to get worse.
- Early intervention and treatment will help to improve the outcome for you and your pet.

Examples of anxiety problems:

Dogs:

- Separation anxiety
- Aggression towards people, dogs, other animals
- Phobias – to noises, situations and thunderstorms
- Fearful behaviour
- Compulsive disorders such as tail chasing, flank sucking and shadow chasing

Cats:

- House soiling
- Urine spraying
- Aggression towards people, cats or other animals

Anxiety problems can't be solved solely by obedience training – a veterinary behaviour consultation is generally required.

Training problems:

Pets with training problems display behaviours that are:

- Generally normal behaviours that are socially unacceptable (either to the owner or the community)

Examples of training problems:

Dogs:

- Digging
- 'Bad' manners – eg. Jumping up
- Barking (in some cases)
- Pulling on the lead
- Boisterous behaviour

Cats:

- Furniture scratching

Training problems can generally be helped by trainers and/or obedience clubs.