

Northwoods Humane Society – Deanna Persson, President

Stress? You bet! All of us have situations that can push stress levels over the normal line. The stress and uncertainty of this past year has been such an intruder on our mental and emotional health. Our stress affects the health of our family members and our pets. Right now, many of us are home more than usual and are pets are loving it. I am kind of concerned about when ‘normal’ returns.

I came across a handout about Canine Stress and Anxiety. It was a promotion for the use of a drug called ADAPTIL. Let me say that I am not recommending this drug nor have I ever used this drug, but the information about stress and anxiety had good thoughts and problem solving. Mike and I adopted a dog from the shelter named Chewy. Chewy had suffered abuse and trauma. At the shelter he was calm, had good house habits and was quiet – he was healing from his massive injuries.

The first day I brought Chewy home, I left him in the house alone for about 40 minutes while I picked up Lola from Wendy’s Clip and Waggin. When I tried to open the front door, it appeared stuck so I entered through another door and found that Chewy had pulled off the door trim and had pushed the rug snugly against the front door. This event was the beginning of Chewy’s journey with stress in our home. His stress issues became a major management issues. Eventually we resorted to a tranquilizer both for his well-being and ours. We had worked with our veterinarian who managed the medications and gave us some suggested changes.

The ‘Canine Stress and Anxiety’ article listed the behavioral signs of stress and anxiety signs as: 1. Destructive when left home (check), 2. Eliminate indoors when home alone or during frightening events (check), excessively lick body parts causing sores (check), 4. May pant, pace, tremble and hide (check) 5. May react easily to noises or new things with barking and excitement (Chewy was deaf).

Medical signs of stress and anxiety may include vomiting or diarrhea, change in body condition, obesity or thinness, Anorexia (loss of appetite), skin lesions from licking.

The following can be done to help diminish stress and anxiety in a dog.

Adding medication prescribed by your veterinarian to decrease stress and anxiety associated with being home along and with reactions to noises and storms and other anxiety producing events, create an environment that allows your dog to have predictability and control, have one food bowl per dog and feed them in separate rooms, have several resting places throughout the house so all dogs can have a safe and quiet resting area, provide the dog with enriched environment to keep them mentally stimulated, strive to have 10 to 15 minute sniff walks off your property 3 times a week, teach you dog tricks or have fun positive training sessions, set aside time each day to be with your pet.

We did most of these things for Chewy – we never accomplished the new tricks. I personally have dealt with exhaustion, stress and lack of sleep for many years and now have more control of it. One reason is because my Doctor prescribed Trazadone for me. The humor is that Chewy’s doctor prescribed the same thing for him but he got a higher dose.

If your dog has anxiety issues – don't say he is a bad dog – work with someone to help find solutions that will let you and your pet live in harmony. Chewy passed away of natural causes a year ago. All of a sudden there was big hole (not literally) in our home and to this day I miss Chewy, his quirkiness, his snuggling and his big brown root beer eyes.