

What heading back to the office means for our pets

June 1 2020



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As we head back to the office, and our time spent at home slowly lessens, we need to consider how our pets will fare with this change and what we can do to help them through the process.

Dr. Nicole Laing, section head and lecturer in [small animal primary care](#) from The Animal Hospital at Murdoch University, weighed in on how we can ease our furry friends through the transition to help reduce their anxiety.

Dogs are social beings and have most likely enjoyed spending this extra time at home with the rest of the family, meaning they could be affected by this upcoming shift.

"Dogs, in particular, feel more comfortable in a pack environment," explained Dr. Laing.

"We deal with a lot of separation anxiety in dogs in our [western society](#), as we try to have our [dogs](#) fit into the urban lifestyle most of us lead, with the typical eight hour working day.

While many cats tend to be less social, and in turn less reliant on human companionship, this may not be the case for all, and owners should make adjustments based on their pets' unique personalities.

"My own cats have loved having me home and I suspect they will miss the warm lap to sleep on while I work during the day—they love curling up on my desk next to the computer," said Dr. Laing.

This now begs the question of how to help our social pets cope with their return to increased periods of alone time.

Dr. Laing said the top tip is retaining routine as much as possible.

"Animals really do love routine. I have been getting up at the same time and walking my dog every morning at 6am, despite having that extra hour in the day as I'm not traveling to and from work."

Ensuring alone time for your pet while still working at [home](#) and shifting their play time to hours that can be maintained once having returned to work, will be very helpful during this transition.

"I am trying to ignore the attention seeking behaviors during the day when my dog tries to tempt me away from work to play.

"I also make my dog take [time](#) out in the backyard or another room away from my workspace for a least a couple of hours during the day," added Dr. Laing.

Another piece of advice is to enrich the [home environment](#) to keep your pets entertained.

"When it comes to your dog, the use of puzzle feeding toys and chew toys, such as a Kong, can help."

This idea of enrichment also applies to cats to keep them engaged and entertained through the day.

However, if your furry friend does find this transition period difficult even with those considerations in mind, this may result in a recommendation to visit your veterinarian to help with the separation anxiety. In the case of severe anxiety, this may lead to a referral to an animal behaviouralist.

"The sooner we realize the need to prepare our furry kids for the change and start to help alter their behaviors, the less stressful the transition will be for our pets."

Provided by Murdoch University

Citation: What heading back to the office means for our pets (2020, June 1) retrieved 22 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-06-office-pets.html>

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