How to Spot and Treat Depression in Dogs
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As a dog parent, nothing is as heart breaking as seeing your furry friend sad and gloomy. Depression can manifest itself in many ways for our pooches and if you're not aware of the signs and symptoms it can be challenging to identify. If you think your dog may depressed, try not to worry, as there are various ways that it can be treated. The key is understanding what signs to look out for, so you can help your furry friend when they need you the most.

Can dogs get depressed?

Just like humans, dogs can experience depression, but since they can’t tell us when something’s up, it often goes undiagnosed and untreated. Watching out for changes in your {dog’s body language} or behaviour is the best way to spot when they’re not feeling so bright eyed and bushy tailed.

Symptoms and signs of depression

Depression symptoms in dogs can vary depending on how serious it is and the dog's personality. Some common signs your pooch might be feeling blue include:

- Decreased or loss of appetite
- Lack of interest in activities or toys
- Sleeping excessively
- Isolation or withdrawal from social interaction
- Aggression or irritability
- Excessive licking or chewing
- Sad expressions or lack of enthusiasm
- Frequently toileting indoors

Common causes of depression

Our furry companions suffer from depression for a range of reasons, from grief to boredom. Providing them with lots of love and support through times of change or big events can help keep them feel like themselves.

Grief

Dogs are social creatures, and they may feel a sense of loss and grief when a family member or another pet companion passes away. You can help prevent them from feeling lonely or sad by dishing out lots of extra attention through these tough times.

Pain or illness

Physical pain, illness or injury can make dogs feel emotionally low, so be sure to never ignore any signs your pup may be feeling under the weather. Make sure to get them seen by a vet if these signs persist, so they can receive any treatment they need as quickly as possible.

Social isolation

Our furry friends love to be around their human and pet friends. If they don’t experience enough social interaction and playtime, it can lead to them feeling down, bored and lonely. It may also contribute to your dog experiencing separation anxiety, so work out a plan to

make sure your pooch is getting the love and attention they deserve, whether this means having someone pop in to break up long periods by themselves or working from home when you can.

Insufficient stimulation

Dogs need mental and physical exercise to stay happy and healthy, and being cooped up indoors without enough mental stimulation can trigger depression. Giving your pooch daily walks, time for play and access to an outdoor space where possible are all great ways to keep them entertained.

Ruling out medical issues

Before you diagnose your dog with depression, pay a trip to the vet to rule out any underlying medical issue, your vet will be able to advise what’s best for your pooch. Some conditions, such as thyroid dysfunction and chronic pain, such as arthritis, can cause depression in pets, but will need different treatment.

Treatment options

If your pup is diagnosed with depression, there’s no reason to panic, as dog depression can be treated in a variety of ways. The important thing is to work out the cause. If a physical issue is causing depression, your vet will discuss a treatment plan. Depending on how serious your dog’s depression is, your vet may recommend one or a combination of the following treatments:

Physical

Physical activity isn’t just essential for your doggo’s physical health, but it can also help boost their mood and alleviate depression. A little bit of exercise can do wonders for their overall wellbeing, so make sure you take them for daily walks and make time for regular play.

Emotional

Changing your dog's daily routine or adding in new activities can help stimulate their minds and improve their emotional wellbeing. Spend extra time playing with your dog take them on a different walking route or introduce them to a new toy.

Medication

Dogs don’t often require antidepressants, but there are some situations where medication

can help balance your dog's chemical levels and improve their mood. Always see your vet before starting your dog on any medications. Spotting and treating depression in our furry friends can be challenging, but by knowing the signs to look out for and common causes of depression, you can give them the support they need. Your pooch deserves all the love and attention you can offer, and with the right treatment, they can go back to being the bright and happy pup you know and love. For more tips on how to keep your dog happy and healthy, check out our blog.

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