

## Alone Again

By Lorraine May, M.A.

“Why is everyone in such a rush? What about my morning hike? Who wants to play ball? I would love some pets and a special treat. Hey, where did everyone go?” bemoans Augie, eyeing his beloved shark toy.

As the summer holiday comes to an end, family dogs are often negatively impacted by the long absences now necessary for their families to resume school and work. A summer of fun and togetherness ends all too soon for us. Imagine how abruptly it ends for this very social family member who has no idea why everything is changing.

Dogs can have a difficult time with dramatic rescheduling, especially when left alone for longer periods than normal. Some dogs are more sensitive than others due to prior abandonment, genuine attachment to family or general anxiety when solo.

The resulting behavior changes can be stressful for the humans as they manage a more complicated day, and frustrating for dogs as they try unsuccessfully to garner the usual amount of attention. Due to anxiety, a dog can lose his appetite or become depressed. Out of boredom, dogs may chew and bark. Less exercise can result in hyperactive homecomings or housetraining regressions.

To avoid creating a dog with ‘alone again’ syndrome, consider a mid-day dog walker, a dog daycare, lunch at home, or a play date with a friend. Associate your absence with an interactive toy, a stuffed Kong or a durable Nylabone. Try putting four drops of Rescue Remedy in your dog’s water each time you refill it and playing the soothing Through A Dog’s Ear CD.

If you can ease your dog into autumn with planned gradual separations and a strategy to help him feel secure and loved, the transition can proceed more smoothly for all members of the household.