**Q. My dog Chester is a 9-year-old Labrador, he has started howling when we leave him this is annoying, what should I be looking to do?**

A. Bless him, if this is the first time he has started signs of separation anxiety then you need to be looking for things that may have changed. This can be with Chester, you and your family. Such as Chester having pain or discomfort, loss of hearing, is there a new pet in the house, or next door? Have you moved recently, gained a new partner or has somebody left home, have you changed your routines, or changed his diet? While howling can be annoying, especially if you have neighbours and they cause you concern, it is important to remember that Chester is mostly likely distressed. Of course, Chester could be bored or frustrated but usually there are other signs that indicate this, such as destructive behaviour and certain patterns in barking, but you haven’t mentioned this. Making an appropriate assessment of Chester is so important before you consider a treatment plan. Separation distress is composed of many different emotional drive states and this needs clarification, there are also medical changes that cause anxiety when left alone. Think about if Chester is showing any other signs of anxiety or fear? Is he more attached to you or another member of your family? How much exercise does he have, too little or too much can cause distress, does he tend to be a loner or is he more attention seeking generally? Have you changed how you interact with him, if you have changed your job routine then sometimes owners try to ‘make it up’ to their dogs by providing more attention than normal when they are at home, is this something you can relate to? However, you need help as quickly as possible so there are a few things you could try for now until you seek professional help. Ignore him for at least ten minutes before you leave and when you return, maintain your daily routines whether you are working or not. Make his environment as stress free as possible, introduce a safe, comfortable ‘hidey hole’ with unwashed clothing that have your scent, make use of an ADAPTIL Plug in diffuser and / or collar, provide stimulation for Chester, isolate external noises by playing a radio with classical music, and try leaving down his dinner or other high value safe food items. There are many behaviour rehabilitation techniques that can be applied but ideally you need to work with a behaviourist that understands the application of animal learning theories, ethology and psychopharmacology if needed and one that will support you over several weeks or months.

**Q. We are struggling to house train our puppy, he is 18 weeks old and still urinates in the house, do you have any suggestions?**

A. Thank you for asking, the sooner you crack this the better for him, you and your house! As always, check he does not suffer with a urinary infection or any other medical conditions such as polyuria (produces large amounts of dilute urine) or polydipsia (an abnormal thirst) as examples. Puppies are sensitive to internal indicators telling them their bowels are full, and they need to go to the toilet more frequently than adult dogs. If your puppy has experienced restricted access to his favourite latrine, he would gradually learned to disregard these feelings, but if you have provided continuous access to his latrine area, by putting down newspaper or puppy training pads, or left the back door open for example then he may not have learned to ‘hold on’. It is likely from this that he has remained sensitive to these signals, being able to urinate at any time, this could be the problem. So, to start with, make sure he is only allowed to go outdoors to one spot, do not provide any other latrine area. Your puppy will have learned a substrate preference by the time he was twelve weeks old, so it is important to reinforce the correct area for him to go as early as possible. As with all problem solving there are many approaches in the behaviourists’ tool box, but for now hopefully the following may help. Make sure you are not punishing him for any urine or defecation in the home, ‘old school’ approaches can create other unwanted behavioural problems. Stop any delayed punishment and hide any anger or upset you may be feeling. Learn to identify any signs that he needs to go out and take him out at these times especially after he has consumed any food or drink. Keep him restricted on a lead in this area and praise him when he urinates. Use a product like Urine-Off indoors to help avoid further mistake.