

Petsitter Can Help Curb Dog's Anxiety

Less time alone is answer for dog who gets into trash and digs destructively when home alone.

By Jon Geller, DVM

Q. Our 8-year-old Vizsla has started opening the cabinet door under the sink to get into the garbage. He has also gone to great lengths when on walks or jogs to get any type of garbage he sees, even if that means running off while off leash to get it. He has been an off-leash dog since birth and has never had these issues. We have put a baby lock on the inside of the cupboard and that has stopped it for the most part. But he has gotten the door open enough to grab the trash bag and get some trash.

Do you think he could have a nutritional deficiency? He also has some anxiety issues. Could that be the problem?

A. So your Vizsla has turned into a garbage hound and a rather clever one, at that. This should come as no surprise because most dogs live to eat. Once dogs discover the joys and rewards buried in the kitchen trash and underneath picnic tables, they may undergo an almost spiritual transformation which can turn every walk into a pilgrimage to the trash barrel shrines lining the streets. Left alone, they may commit their entire canine IQ into figuring out how to bypass the child locks and lids keeping them from the rotting and odiferous treasures just beyond the reach of their jaws.

It also should not be surprising that clever dogs are also the sensitive ones, and when they are not on a mission to uncover morsels of trash they explore their own anxiety, sometimes with destructive results. Long absences by his master can compound the separation anxiety, so it is important that you create an environment where he feels secure in your absence.

Hopefully, he has a loving and attentive petsitter when you are gone, perhaps one who takes him on frequent walks by his favorite trash barrels in the park.