

Life after lockdown for pets



Coming out of lockdown for pets may seem a little strange...

Exercise

Many dogs have been exercising more frequently or walked longer distances than they did before lockdown due to their owners spending more time at home. As our routines normalise and owners return to work, these dogs may not get quite as much exercise. It is important to consider that they will therefore require less calories, and adjust their food appropriately so that they do not put on weight.

Some owners who have been shielding have not been able to exercise their dogs as much as they usually would during lockdown. It is important that exercise for these pets is gradually re-introduced, so that their muscles and overall fitness are gradually built up. We would recommend slowly increasing exercise from the current level to the dog's usual pre-lockdown level over a period of 4 weeks.

Routine

Another big change for the nation's pets as lockdown ends is that family members are going back to work and school after spending lots of time together. Again, a gradual transition is recommended, over a period of 4 weeks. Initially, spend time at home in a different room to the pet with doors closed. Next, leave the pet at home alone for 10-15 minutes several times throughout the day. Gradually build up the amount of time spent out of the house. Leave puzzle feeders or interesting toys to keep them entertained, and you could leave the radio or television on. For some dogs and cats that are feeling anxious, pheromone products or calming supplements may help. Please give us a call if you have any questions or concerns about your pet.

Visitors

Over the lockdown period, we have not been having visitors into our homes. Puppies, kittens and even some older animals may feel more anxious around new people as they have not been exposed to them before. For dogs, going for a walk with their owner and the new person is advisable before they come inside. When the visitor enters the home, they could give treats or toys to the pet to help build a positive relationship. If the pet feels nervous and chooses to walk away, this is okay. Allow the pet space and time to approach the visitor on their own terms. It may take time and multiple short visits for the pet to build confidence around new people.