

How Pets Experience Stress

Family Matters

Stress isn't just something people experience.

Dogs and cats can feel stressed too.

Just like us, a little stress can be normal. But when stress becomes prolonged or overwhelming, it can affect your pet's behaviour, physical health and overall quality of life.

At Amity, we believe that recognising stress early is one of the kindest things you can do for your pet. Our purpose is to **Empower You Through Education**, helping you understand what your pet is trying to tell you before small concerns become bigger problems.

What Causes Stress?

Every pet is different.

Some confidently embrace new experiences, while others prefer routine and familiarity.

Common causes of stress include:

- Moving house.
- A new baby or family member.
- Another pet joining the household.
- Loud noises such as fireworks or thunderstorms.
- Changes in routine.
- Being left alone.
- Visits to the vet.
- Pain or illness.

What seems like a small change to us can feel like a major event to our pets.

How Do Pets Show Stress?

Pets rarely tell us they're stressed in obvious ways.

Instead, they communicate through changes in their behaviour.

You may notice:

- Hiding or avoiding people.
- Excessive barking or meowing.
- Panting when not hot.

- Pacing or restlessness.
- Changes in appetite.
- Excessive grooming or licking.
- Toileting indoors.
- Destructive behaviour.
- Becoming unusually clingy or withdrawn.
- Aggression or irritability.

The important thing isn't simply noticing these behaviours—it's asking **why** they've appeared.

Stress and Health Are Closely Linked

Stress doesn't just affect behaviour.

It can weaken the immune system, reduce appetite, interfere with sleep and even contribute to medical conditions.

Likewise, pets experiencing pain or illness often appear stressed.

That's why sudden behavioural changes should never automatically be dismissed as "just behavioural."

Sometimes the behaviour is the first clue that something medical is happening.

How Can You Reduce Stress?

The best way to help is to create an environment where your pet feels safe and understood.

Provide:

- A predictable daily routine.
- Plenty of exercise appropriate for your pet.
- Mental stimulation through play and enrichment.
- A quiet place where they can retreat.
- Gentle, reward-based training.
- Patience when introducing new experiences.

Small changes in your pet's environment can often make a remarkable difference.

When Should You Seek Help?

If your pet's behaviour changes suddenly, becomes severe or starts affecting their quality of life, it's time to seek advice.

At Amity, we'll first ensure there isn't an underlying medical reason for the behaviour before discussing how best to help your pet emotionally.

Sometimes simple management strategies are enough.

Sometimes behavioural training is appropriate.

Occasionally, medication may also be recommended to support your pet while they learn to cope more confidently.

That's why **Amity Essential Membership includes unlimited health checks**. If you're worried about a change in your pet's behaviour, we'd much rather help early than allow stress to become a long-term problem.

Understanding Builds Confidence

Your pet isn't trying to be difficult.

They're trying to communicate.

The better you understand their behaviour, the better you can support them through life's inevitable challenges.

A pet who feels safe is more confident.

A confident pet is happier.

And a happier pet makes for a happier family.

Because they're not just your pet.

They're family.

Family Matters.

If you need more information, book an appointment with an Amity vet. We're here to Empower You Through Education and help you become your pet's greatest advocate.