

## HELP! MY DOG HAS CABIN FEVER!

We have all experienced it at some point. Either due to bad weather or illness, we just can't seem to get outside. "Cabin Fever" sets in. We feel anxious or unsettled. We feel bored and really just want something to do. Our dogs can and do go through the same thing!

Where I am located it has been around 20 degrees for some days now. The first day my dog Cookie and I were like "umm, no thank you! Just a quick potty break please!" Pretty much the same for the second day. But by the third day we were both like "we gotta get outa here!" We did try a walk, but it was very short. Very short. So, to help my high energy dog get her "wiggles" out, we played some games in the house. Here are some ideas for you to exercise your dog in the house when it's too cold or raining, or whatever.

- Do trick training! Get a book (or email me for ideas) on trick training and learn something new. This not only exercises the body, but also your dog's mind, as well as nurtures your relationship and improves communication.
- Play fetch. Even in a small house you can do this. If you have stairs and your dog is able to handle it, play fetch up and down the stairs.
- Play hide and seek. Have your dog sit and wait in one room then you go hide in another room. Hide under a blanket, behind the curtains, someplace your dog wouldn't expect you to be. Then call them. Make it harder by strewing your dirty laundry around the room.
- Play "Go find it". This is where you hide treats around the house and have them search for them. Start out easy, with the treats in plain sight and tell your dog "go find it." Once they get the idea of the game, you can start making it harder by hiding treats behind or under things.
- Get a Snuffle Mat
- Use Puzzle Toys
- Play tug (and yes, it is ok for your dog to win sometimes)
- Set up an Indoor Agility Course. You don't really need a lot of room for this either, but a long hallway is great. Put pillows or boxes on the floor and have your dog jump over them, go around them, jump in them (get a hula hoop!). Have obstacles for them to go under also as this works different muscles than jumping over something. Use your imagination but be sure that obstacles are secure and keep your dog safe.
- Take your dog to a dog friendly store and walk up and down every aisle. This is a good time to reinforce any behavior training such as sit, leave it, heel, etc. Be sure to watch out for salt or ice melt in the parking lot!

There are many ways to get some enrichment on those cold yucky days. Use your imagination and go play with your dog. And if you do go out, please remember that as much as you like to bundle up against the cold, your dog may also appreciate an extra layer or two. And don't forget those paws! Put on some doggie booties not only against the cold but also against the ICE. On our short walk yesterday, the snow had a layer of ice on top and with every step Cookie was breaking through. That ice can be sharp enough to cut through pads. The dew claw and the carpal pad is especially vulnerable to damage if their paw goes through the ice.

Written by Chaplain Jill Marie Chambers, C4C Canine Program Facilitator