

Therapy overview and treatment plan

Dear Owner,

I will now be going through your treatment plan which helps document the types of therapy and training we will be doing and at the end a daily plan which will help breakdown this overview into weekly easy to digest tasks for you to do.

Aims and objectives

* Improving Bruce’s cognitive functioning and reducing restlessness at night with simple enrichment and trick training
* To improve Bruce’s independence so he is less clingy in the day/night
* To reduce any triggers that could be contributing to the issue
* To improve any potential environmental stressors
* To improve Bruce’s overall routine

Therapy overview

You will need to follow the following points carefully to have the best chance of gaining success with this programme. The key below explains the main aspects of the therapy plan, so it is easily broken down into different sections. This way you will know what methods are most appropriate. It is important that in the initial stages we have a high level of control over the triggers.

KEY

Management and control

For you to follow the plan successfully you will need to be able to have some degree of control over the triggers. You must also be able to manage your dog’s routine and ensure you have the right tools before you start any training.

Foundation training

Foundation training is a set of skills to not only help connect with your dog but to also enable you to have some skills in place to cope with challenging situations.

Enrichment, routine and lifestyle

A lack or not enough of mental stimulation, incorrect diet and unstructured routine can all have an impact on the therapy plan. We take on a holistic approach taking all factors into account.

Behaviour therapy

I always look at the underlying emotional issues before I start any primary training. Much of the behaviour therapy I do leads to the dog making other choices.

Primary training

Much of the work I do above leads to reinforcing more appropriate behaviours these are often called mutually exclusive behaviours.

Management and control

I would recommend not leaving Bruce for longer periods of time, especially in the treatment period. This is so if there are any separation issues, we can then treat these in conjunction with the decline in cognitive function. When left alone/at night you will be monitoring his behaviour via a camera.

Foundation training

We discussed a lot of basic training – practicing a simple hand target and shaping. I will get you some more tutorials on this in due course. I will like to see more mental training in the day, particularly on walks and at periods of time where he wants to sleep in the day. This increased sleep in the day may be contributing to his restlessness at night time.

Routine, enrichment and life style

We will be focusing on some simple enrichment to increase mental and physical activity levels, particularly in the day. We practiced some work around the cones, particularly scent work. We also discussed ‘free work’ and watched a video of this in action. Free work helps increase mental and physical activity and reduces any anxiety associated with his condition, plus gives him a job to do. It is also a great exercise for dogs to identify body movements and areas causing pain/discomfort. Free work involves putting novel objects on the ground in a combination with different surface areas and smells. You can do this in an open area in the room or even in the garden. We can also use this to increase independence away from you and reduce any restlessness at night.

We will also be focusing on his structure – more mental enrichment on walks and in house, earlier walk at night followed by cone work/free work as above and any environmental factors. I feel that the later walk may be increasing energy levels before bed, so we need to do a cool, down after the walk as above.

We are also going to look at some preference testing, providing an extra bed by the door, plus changing a few things in his sleeping environment. I feel the laminate flooring could be contributing to the issues and have suggested putting out some carpet in his sleeping area. You may also like to consider some matting so it is easier for him to lye or sit down.

The light from the window and heat from the radiator may be a contributing factor also so you may look into getting a black out blind, covering the door and as above a preference test for positioning of bed away from the radiator.

We also discussed possible noises interfering with his sleep pattern. You may wish to consider a white noise device (can be downloaded on phone as a sound app) or keeping the radio on low volume.

Behavioural therapy

I feel it would be good to increase Bruce’s independence away from you, there is a worry that the barking could be due to separation issues, which could explain his clinginess to you. However, Bruce has not shown these issues in the past. The incident with the diarrhoea may have been a contributing factor and this may have increased Bruce’s anxiety at night as he can’t get access to the outside. Confidence building will help by getting Bruce to settle on a bed away from you for some of the time. You can make him feeling more comfortable doing so by putting treats on the bed or his Kong wobbler. Any time alone from you has to be built up gradually. Also using the cones and free work so Bruce is less clingy will really help. I also suggest staying up a little later, if possible, to keep Bruce company. One of the most important things is he is completely settled before bedtime or when you are going out.

Primary training

As above using cone work to increase activity levels in day, teaching him a sustained settle on a bed in the living room and re-looking at his bedtime routine and overall structure.

Training rota

This rota is a general overview for the next two weeks. This is subject to change if there is a decline in his cognitive function or if this becomes more of a separation issue case.

1. Increase enrichment in day with simple cone work, sniffing on walks and trick training (low intensity). I would also like you to look at doing some free work.
2. Increase independence in day/early eve by some short periods of settling away from you on his bed.
3. Put carpet down in kitchen (you can buy off cuts from a furniture store) and do some preference testing of bed positioning.
4. Try to reduce any light and noise coming into the kitchen.
5. Possible earlier walk in eve and late mental enrichment and settle before bed. Possibly staying up a little later to give him extra company.
6. Video footage at night and when left.