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WHAT'S HAPPENIN' AT LEKC

December: 11th, Christmas Party
January 15th, Meeting
January 23rd & 24th, Conformation Show, Ocala



Photo by Tonja Brandt

Everything You Need to Know About Emotional Support Animals

By [Stephanie Gibeault, MSc, CPDT](#)

Oct 03, 2019 | 3 Minutes

Every dog owner knows there are many benefits to having a dog, from getting themselves out for exercise to receiving loyal companionship. However, for some people with mental or emotional conditions, the presence of a dog is critical to their ability to function normally on a daily basis. The pet provides emotional support and comfort that helps them deal with challenges that might otherwise compromise their quality of life. These pets are known as emotional support animals (ESAs).

What Is an Emotional Support Dog?

Although all dogs offer an emotional connection with their owner, to legally be considered an emotional support dog, also called an emotional support animal (ESA), the pet needs to be prescribed by a licensed mental health professional to a person with a disabling mental illness. A therapist, psychologist, or psychiatrist must determine that the presence of the animal is needed for the mental health of the patient. For example, owning a pet might ease a person's anxiety or give them a focus in life. The dogs can be any age and any breed.

Emotional Support Dog vs. Service Dogs

ESAs provide support through companionship and can help ease anxiety, depression, and certain phobias. However, they are not [service dogs](#), and ESA users do not receive the same accommodations as service dog users.

A service dog, such as a guide dog, is generally allowed anywhere the public is allowed; ESAs are not. For example, ESAs generally cannot accompany their owners into restaurants or shopping malls.

The [Americans With Disabilities Act](#) (ADA) defines service animals as “dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities.” The act clearly states that animals that simply provide emotional comfort do not qualify as service animals. Some state and local laws have a broader definition, so be sure to check with local government agencies to learn if ESAs qualify for public access in your area.

The key difference between a service dog and an emotional support dog is whether the animal has been trained to perform a specific task or job directly related to the person’s disability. For example, service dogs are trained to alert a hearing-impaired person to an alarm or to guide a visually impaired person around an obstacle.

Behaviors such as cuddling on cue, although comforting, do not qualify. The tasks need to be specifically trained to mitigate a particular disability, not something instinctive the dog would do anyway.

Emotional Support Dogs Are Not Psychiatric Service Dogs

There are service dogs, known as [psychiatric service dogs](#) that require extensive training to work specifically with people whose disability is due to mental illness. These dogs detect the beginning of psychiatric episodes and help ease their effects. Although this sounds similar to the role of an ESA, the difference between a psychiatric service dog and an ESA is again in the tasks performed by the dog and the training received to perform these tasks.

Psychiatric service dogs (recognized by the ADA as service dogs) have been trained to do certain jobs that help the handler cope with a mental illness. For example, the dog might remind a person to take prescribed medications, keep a disoriented person in a dissociative episode from wandering into a hazardous situation such as traffic or perform room searches for a person with post-traumatic stress disorder. If it is simply the dog’s presence that helps the person cope, then the dog does not qualify as a psychiatric service dog.

Accommodations for Individuals Who Use Emotional Support Dogs

Individuals who use ESAs are provided certain accommodations under federal law in the areas of housing and air travel. The [Fair Housing Act](#) includes ESAs in its definition of assistance animals. Under the act, people cannot be discriminated against due to a disability when obtaining housing. Rules such as pet bans or restrictions are waived for people who have a prescription for an ESA, and they cannot be charged a pet deposit for having their ESA live with them.

The [Air Carrier Access Act](#) allows service animals and ESAs to accompany their handlers in the cabin of an aircraft. The airline can require documentation stating that the person has a disability and the reason why the animal must travel with them. If you intend to travel with an ESA, contact the airline ahead of time to ensure you can provide the appropriate paperwork.

ESAs can be any common domestic animal including dogs, cats, or ferrets, and more. To qualify, the animal must be reasonably well behaved and under the control of its handler at all times. It also must be housebroken, and cannot be a nuisance or danger to others. Airlines may exclude certain types of animals from accompanying passengers. Like, service dogs, emotional support dogs are not required to wear identifying equipment, such as a vest or a harness.

Emotional support dogs can perform an important role in the life of a person with mental or emotional conditions. When people who do not have a disability abuse the system by misrepresenting a pet as an ESA to obtain special accommodation, they undermine important accommodations for individuals with a legitimate need for this assistance.

Pictures worth a thousand words



I'm sorry, but when you said you wanted to be "friends with benefits," I thought you meant you wanted to pay for my dog sport entries.

@thingsdoghandlersay

Never leave home without a kiss, a hug and an 'I love you.' Then remove the dog hair from your mouth as you walk to the car.

Human Foods That Are Actually Good for Your Dog (Animal Encyclopedia)

Watermelon

"It is a health-food powerhouse, low in calories and packed with nutrients—vitamins A, B6, and C, and potassium," according to The American Kennel Club. Watermelon is also a great snack to give your dog on a hot day, as it is mostly water. Pro tip: Freeze some watermelon cubes for your dog to make for an even better cool-down.

Blueberries

Blueberries are absolutely packed with antioxidants, making them extremely healthy for man's best friend and one of the best human food dogs can eat. Depending on your dog's size, however, choking might be a potential risk; try cutting up the berries for smaller dogs.

Apples

Apples are light and delicious for both you and your dog. According to CesarsWay.com, they also provide fiber, vitamins A and C, omega-3, omega-6, antioxidants, flavonoids, polyphenols. "But make sure your dog doesn't eat the apple seeds," Dr. Ryan warns.

"They are toxic!" Apple seeds actually contain small traces of cyanide. The human digestive system

Veggies your dog can eat

Even if you're not keen on eating your vegetables, your dogs will be. This healthy human food dogs can eat provide nutrients with minimal calories. However—as with humans—dogs can have adverse reactions to certain foods, even if they are supposedly good for them.

“It’s important to know that dogs can have food intolerances just like people, causing gastrointestinal upset or even an allergic reaction,” Dr. Ryan says. Be sure to monitor your dog and check with your vet if you’re questioning whether to introduce food into their diet.

Carrots

Carrots are wonderful snacks for your pup. Purina says that dogs can eat carrots in several ways: raw, cooked, or even with the green tops still on them. But remember, they’re just a small part of your pet’s complete diet.

Green beans

Green beans are the full package, according to Rover.com: They’re a great source of fibre, omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins A, C, and K, folic acid, magnesium, calcium, iron, and potassium. In fact, green beans are so healthy for dogs that some people make a sizeable portion of their fur baby’s daily food regimen. Just remember not to add salt or seasoning.

Asparagus

This vegetable has plenty of fiber, which can be good for a dog’s digestive health. As a snack, cooked asparagus is perfectly safe for dogs. Just don’t give Fido the raw version: It can be difficult for him to digest.

Spinach

Spinach is rich in antioxidants, iron, and vitamin K. That’s what makes it so healthy for humans and a potentially beneficial part of your dog’s diet. According to Rover.com, spinach can boost your dog’s immune system and energy levels, making for an all-around healthier pet.

Pumpkin

Vets often recommend pumpkin when a dog is constipated or has other digestive issues. Give your dog some canned pumpkin with their kibble to keep their digestive system running smoothly.

Look the organic kind, recommends Dr. Ryan, and “be sure it’s not pumpkin pie mix to avoid the spices. Also check with your veterinarian to see how much pumpkin he or she recommends, as too much can cause diarrhea.”

Meat your dog can eat

One of the first ingredients that comes to mind when asking what human food can dogs eat is meat. And your dog may love most kinds of meat—just make sure whatever cut you give your pet doesn’t have much fat on it. Food with high-fat content can easily make your dog gain weight. As far as land animals go, chicken is always a safe bet, especially when your dog has an upset stomach.

“Try bland foods like poached chicken and steamed white rice,” says Ann Hohenhaus, DVM, of New York City’s Animal Medical Centre. “Veterinarians also recommend feeding cooked protein sources rather than raw protein sources,” she adds. “Protein like meat and eggs can carry diseases in microbes unless properly cooked.”

Chicken broth

It's not just the meat of the chicken that is good for your dog to eat. "Bone broth, either homemade or store-bought, can help a dog with an upset stomach," advises Dr. Ryan. However, be extremely cautious about the actual bones.

"If you are feeding your dog any type of meat, remove all bones before giving it to them. Ingesting the bones could cause a variety of problems for dogs like broken teeth, an injured mouth [or] an intestinal blockage that requires surgery."

Fish

Fish is one human food dogs can eat—so long as it isn't raw. And certain types of fish are healthier for your dog than others. Salmon, ocean whitefish, and herring, for example, are fish that live short lives, so they have lower levels of mercury compared to fish near the top of the food chain like, say, swordfish.

Foods you should never feed your dog

What human food can dogs eat is just as important to know as what not to feed fido. You know that grapes and raisins are off the menu, but so are onions, garlic, avocado, and anything containing the sugar substitute xylitol, warns both Dr. Ryan and Dr. Hohenhaus.

Dogs may go nuts for peanut butter, but check the label—some brands are sweetened with xylitol. Both doctors also advise that human food that is not a specific part of your dog's daily food regimen should not take up more than 10 percent of their daily diet.

