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Animal Welfare Association Shares Tips to Help Your Dog Adjust to Back to School Season

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Voorhees, NJ – Preparing for your family to go back to school creates a big adjustment for everyone, including your dog. Dog owners should remember that a change in their schedule also means a change in their pets' schedule. Animal Welfare Association (AWA) encourages families to practice the following tips in an effort to ease their dogs' transitions during back to school season.

"Back to school season is upon us and now is the perfect time to get your pets ready for the family's change in schedule," says AWA Behavior Coordinator Elizabeth Stanley-Reicherter. "By preparing your dog in advance, you can trust that they will feel comfortable home alone for longer periods of time."

The first step in preparing your dog for back to school is to start as soon as possible. Family members should begin waking up at the same time they would for school to practice their morning routine. If the morning routine includes letting your dog out at 7 a.m., practicing a week or two before the first day of school will give your pet time to adjust to its new bathroom schedule.

Once school starts, make sure to give your dog a treat before leaving the house. Treats like a Kong filled with peanut butter or wet dog food can help relieve any initial stress or anxiety that your pet associates with being home alone. Other beneficial activities for your dog when you are away include: food puzzles, hiding treats around the house, remote controlled treat dispensers, pet-safe interactive toys and leaving a radio or television on for auditory enrichment.

It may also benefit younger dogs and puppies to have a dog walker visit your home during the afternoon to take your pet outdoors. Puppies can't hold their bladders as long as adult dogs – if a dog walker isn't an option, leave pee pads available in an easy to clean area. For adult dogs, make sure to take them outside as soon as the first family member gets home from school.

Back to school is also a great time for your dog to learn – AWA offers low-cost classes on a variety of topics like basic obedience and loose leash walking. Your pet can also receive a diploma!

For more information on helping your pet adjust during back to school season or attending a pet training class, visit <https://www.awanj.org/>.

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Animal Welfare Association, a private, non-profit, 501(c)3 animal welfare organization, serves the people and animals of southern New Jersey. AWA is dedicated to eliminating animal suffering, promoting the importance of the human-animal bond, and improving the role of animals in the wellbeing of people. Through a variety of programs including adoptions, veterinary services, pet therapy, and humane education. AWA is South Jersey's leader in progressive companion animal care.