The authors examined how separation-related behaviors in pet dogs changed in relation to time spent away from home by UK owners in February 2020 (pre-pandemic), May-July 2020 (first lockdown during the pandemic), and October-November 2020 (local tier-system for restrictions; follow-up). Their main finding is that close to 10% of dogs developed new signs of separation-related behaviors by the follow-up survey. The sample size is good, and the results are interesting. My specific comments are detailed below.

I found the writing awkward in places. Here are some suggestions that can be made throughout the paper:

Title: change “Leaving Pattern” to “Time Spent Away”; leaving pattern is less clear (it could be frequency of leaving each day)

Thank you, we have changed the title to: Impact of changes in time left alone on separation-related behaviour in UK pet dogs

Line 27: change “reduced” to “decreased”

Thank you, this edit has been applied.

Line 29: change “dogs whose leaving hours reduce most” to “dogs whose time left alone decreased most”

Thank you, this edit has been applied.

Line 30: change “leaving hours increase again” to “time left alone increased again”

Thank you, this edit has been applied.

Line 214: if possible (might not be possible if this was how it was phrased in the survey), change “different to before” to “different from before”

This is how it was phrased in the survey, so this has not been changed.

Lines 383-384: Change “dogs’ leaving routines” to “dogs’ time left alone”

Thank you, this edit has been applied.

**Materials and Methods:**

Line 151: how was the criterion of “at least 5 minutes” chosen?

It seemed unfeasible to expect a dog to never be left for even a minute or two, for example if the owner pops outside to take out the bin or to get something from the garage/shed etc.

My main question when reading this section concerned how owners would know that certain separation-related behaviors occurred when they were away? There would be evidence for some behaviors, such as destructive behavior or defecation, but how would owners know about pacing or tail-chasing? This topic is not addressed until the Discussion section (line 395) but should be addressed here in the Methods and Materials section. Were behaviors, including different vocalizations, defined for owners? For example, what is the difference between pined, whined, and cried?

The wording given to the owners is all presented here, and in the supplementary material. No further definitions for behaviours or vocalisations were given. Pined, whined and cried were all mentioned, as all are words owner tend to use to describe similar dog vocalisations. As with all owner awareness of SRBs, it is fundamentally challenging unless they use recording equipment to view their dogs when they leave them or are otherwise able to view their dogs when alone such as by looking through a window. As this is a limitation of the method used, the appropriate place to mention this would be in the Discussion, not the Methods, so we have not discussed this limitation there.

Also, I might have missed it, but did all of these owners live alone with their dog(s), meaning no other people in the household? If other people were present, did all of them have to be away or just the dog’s owner? This information might be presented in your other paper, but it would be good to include this basic information here as well, so readers can better understand your methods and findings.

The wording of the question asked about the dog being left alone, without human company (see line 173), so it applied to anyone, and specifically meant when no-human was present in the house with the dog.

Line 166: define “devolved nations” for readers unfamiliar with the term.

This has now been explained, however this section has been moved entirely to the supplementary material on request of other reviewers.

**Results:**

Figure 2: should the blank box for “Feb, Not at all” be 0.0%?

Not strictly speaking, no. Dogs who were not left in February were excluded from the analysis. So, whilst there are 0 of them, that’s because of methodological choice not because there weren’t any dogs left alone. A note explaining this has been added to the figure legend.

Figure 4 is not called out in the text of the Results section.

There were issues in the figure referencing when we uploaded the manuscript to the submission system. This has now been corrected.

**Conclusions:**

I believe Animals requires a Conclusions section.

For some reason I was convinced I’d read it was optional for longer discussions, but having double checked, you are indeed correct. Thank you. A brief conclusion section has now been added.

**Minor issues:**

Line 35: insert “of” after 9.9%

Thank you, we have corrected the typo.

Line 100: insert “the” after “in”

Thank you, we have corrected the typo.

An error message occurred in several places (e.g., line 131, line 246, line 265)

Thank you, this seemed ok until the manuscript was uploaded but we’ve corrected it now.

Line 148: change “focusses” to “focuses”

Thank you, we’ve corrected the typo.

Line 355: delete the first “the”

This has been corrected

Line 461: change “onto” to “on to”

Thank you, we’ve corrected the typo.