

For thunderstorm anxiety:

Behaviors often demonstrated include: running away, aggression, trembling, hiding, vocalizing, inappropriate elimination, and property damage. The fear associated with storms is often the result of either:

- 1) Noise (thunder, wind, weather radio, etc.)
- 2) change in barometric pressure
- 3) static electricity in the air

If your pet is simply going to their “safe place” or a central location where sound is muffled that is ok, you can even add blankets or their favorite toys to create an environment that is calming and safe. Creating background noise works to distract as well, play the radio low or turn on the television.

For noise, we can work to gradually desensitize them to the sounds of thunder using sound tracks of storms very low and increasing the volume while repeatedly rewarding calm behaviors with praise or small treats.

For the pressure change and static electricity, there is a product called a "Thunder Shirt" that swaddles the dog and helps minimize the body's reaction to the environmental changes and decreases the associated fears. For some dogs, Thundershirt's gentle, constant pressure has a calming effect.

Beyond these measures, we can use synthetic pheromones to calm your pet. Dog Appeasing Pheromone (**D.A.P.® / Adaptil**) naturally helps to relieve anxiety by mimicking the pheromones released by nursing mothers to keep their litter calm. D.A.P.® helps dogs handle stressful situations better (separation, weaning, transport, fear of noise, firework displays, etc.) and enables them to adapt to new situations.

It is important to monitor your own behavior during storms as well. It is tough to do but your pet will benefit if you can ignore the fearful behaviors that occur. If you find yourself rewarding your pet for the anxiety they express you are positively reinforcing those negative behaviors. It is best to distract away from the behavior if at all possible and work to remotely get the situation under control. Play ball, offer a tasty treat, bring out your pet's favorite toy or introduce food puzzles to distract from the behaviors they usually resort to, the behaviors you don't wish to see. The goal would be for your pet to look for a game to play at the first clap of thunder and not a place to hide.

Any pet can also be taught a calming command. This would be along the same lines as teaching to sit or “high five”. The calming commands we use are to recognize and reward calm behavior during everyday life and then introduce that calm command in times of anxiety. On a quiet evening when your dog is resting or entertaining themselves with a toy, begin to praise that quiet time with treat and affection while repeating “good girl, good calm” until by using this command they seek that quiet retreat.

Occasionally we have pets whose anxiety exceeds what can be managed with the above techniques. In these cases we turn to anxiety medications like Xanax or sedatives like Acepromazine. It is essential to understand that these drugs must be absorbed and active in the body before any fear sets in.

For Firework Anxiety:

Behaviors often demonstrated include: running away, aggression, trembling, hiding, vocalizing, inappropriate elimination, and property damage. The fear associated with fireworks is usually the result of the loud noises.

If your pet is simply going to their “safe place” or a central location where sound is muffled that is ok, you can even add blankets or their favorite toys to create an environment that is calming and safe. Creating background noise works to distract as well, play the radio low or turn on the television.

To get your pet to stop reacting to this strange noise, we can work to gradually desensitize them to the sounds of fireworks by using sound tracks of this sound very low and increasing the volume while repeatedly rewarding calm behaviors with praise or small treats.

Beyond these measures, we can use synthetic pheromones to calm your pet. Dog Appeasing Pheromone (D.A.P.® / Adaptil) naturally helps to relieve anxiety by mimicking the pheromones released by nursing mothers to keep their litter calm. D.A.P.® helps dogs handle stressful situations better (separation, weaning, transport, fear of noise, firework displays, etc.) and enables them to adapt to new situations.

It is important to monitor your own behavior during the firework display as well. It is tough to do but your pet will benefit if you can ignore the fearful behaviors that occur. If you find yourself rewarding your pet for the anxiety they express you are positively reinforcing those negative behaviors. It is best to distract away from the behavior if at all possible and work to remotely get the situation under control. Play ball, offer a tasty treat, bring out your pet’s favorite toy or introduce food puzzles to distract from the behaviors they usually resort to, the behaviors you don’t wish to see. The goal would be for your pet to look for a game to play at the first loud “bang!” and not a place to hide.

Any pet can also be taught a calming command. This would be along the same lines as teaching to sit or “high five”. The calming commands we use are to recognize and reward calm behavior during everyday life and then introduce that calm command in times of anxiety. On a quiet evening when your dog is resting or entertaining themselves with a toy, begin to praise that quiet time with treat and affection while repeating “good girl, good calm” until by using this command they seek that quiet retreat.

Occasionally we have pets whose anxiety exceeds what can be managed with the above techniques. In these cases we turn to anxiety medications like Xanax or sedatives like Acepromazine. It is essential to understand that these drugs must be absorbed and active in the body before any fear sets in.