



Storm Phobia

Storm Phobia Triggers

Veterinarians don't know all the triggers but suspect the dogs are set off by some combination of wind, thunder, lightning, barometric pressure changes, static electricity, and low-frequency rumbles preceding a storm that humans can't hear. According to one theory, dogs experience painful shocks from static build-up before the storm. The anxiety often gets worse throughout the season as storms become more frequent.

Storms are reasonably predictable and action can be taken before the storm to ensure your dog is in a safe environment.

1. Be home with your dog

Your dog will be much more fearful if left alone during a thunderstorm. If you have predicted that a storm will occur try to be home with your dog at the time or if possible have someone care for your dog.

2. Remove your dog from your garden

Dogs left outside during a thunderstorm are much more seriously affected than dogs which are inside. Dogs left outside will attempt to escape from your yard or 'inscape' into your home. While the damage to your fences and your home can be extreme and costly, it is the damage your dog could do to itself that is dangerous or even deadly.

3. Place your dog in a sound-proof Den

Thunderstorms are noisy, look scary and smell and your dog will feel it if outside. An obvious move is to move your dog to a sound-proof room inside your home where he or she cannot hear, see, smell or feel the storm. Brick walls are much better at sound proofing than timber and block walls. Walk in wardrobes are often very sound proof because they are surrounded by many walls and the texture of your clothes and smell of your shoes may help your dog to be comforted covering windows with heavy curtains.

4. Use medication where needed

If your dog is seriously affected by storms, your veterinarian will be able to prescribe medication that may help. Your veterinarian will prescribe a medication that is best suited for your dogs phobia. Your dog will require a consultation with a veterinarian and full health check for medications to be dispensed.

5. Use Pheromones

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Dog Pheromones can be very effective for calming noise-fearful dogs with up to 70% effectiveness. These will not work for dogs that are outside but they combine very well when placed inside a sound-proof Den.

8. Practice calming strategies

When your dog is panicking, it needs to develop a calm demeanor. Do whatever you can to create calmness such as; massage and patting.

9. Teach your dog to tolerate thunder noise

Desensitizing your dog to the noise of thunder is often possible using quality recordings of thunder. Play a CD of thunder recordings at low enough levels that don't frighten your dog, while giving him treats or playing a game. Gradually increase the volume over the course of several months, stopping if your dog shows any signs of anxiety. The goal is to get your dog used to the sound of thunder, and associate it with good things.

9. Reward calm behavior year-round.

Many owners make the mistake of trying to console and pet a fearful dog that's whimpering or climbing on them, but that just encourages the panicky behaviour, Sherman says.

"We absolutely don't want owners to scold their dog, but we don't want them to reward the dog for being clingy because that will increase the clingy behaviour," she says.

Instead, practice getting your dog to settle on command. Sherman advises clients to put a special "inside" leash on the dog and practice having the pet lie at their feet while praising the calm behaviour.

10. Consider a snug garment.

Snug-fitting shirts and wraps especially designed to calm anxious dogs are worth a try. Thunder shirts, a pressure garment that is said to have a calming effect similar to swaddling a baby.



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