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## **Thunderstorm and Firework Anxiety in Pets**

This time of year many pets suffer anxiety from storms and fireworks. Dogs may show a variety of signs including hiding, panting, trembling, pacing, vocalizing or destructive behavior. Some dogs will become accustomed to storms over time, while others can become more sensitive with each exposure. If the dog's response to storms or fireworks is severe, it is considered a phobia.

### **Home Care**

Hiding during a thunderstorm or fireworks is a normal response. You can create a safe place for your pet to go during these times. Try to close doors and windows to block out noise. You can also play music or turn the TV on to distract the pet from fear associated noises. Some pets can be distracted by giving them a toy, doing obedience activities or redirecting their attention in other ways. If your pet responds well to these things, you may not need to do anything else. Make sure that you are not acting panicked during storms, as it can make your pet's anxiety worse.

### **Medications**

If your pet does not respond to distractions, sometimes nutraceutical products or other natural products can calm pets with mild anxiety. There is a dog pheromone called D.A.P®, which can be used alone or with other products.

Some pets will require medication to relieve them from the anxiety. Every pet reacts differently to medications. You should consult with your veterinarian to find the correct product and dose that will help your pet.

Acepromazine is an oral sedative that can be given to dogs. This product provides mild sedation and may be enough that pets are not aware of the scary stimulus and are less anxious. This medication should be given a short time before the event. Another medication is alprazolam. This is a human medication used to treat anxiety disorders. In pets, it depresses part of the central nervous system which causes the pet to relax. This medication also needs to be given at least 1 hr prior to the event.

Some pets that have severe signs will need to be on a daily medication such as fluoxetine or clomipramine.

### **Long Term Treatment**

Many pets can be trained to be calm during thunderstorms and fireworks. Desensitization and counter conditioning exercises gradually get your pet used to these scary noises over time. To do these exercises, you would use a CD of storm and fireworks noises. There are products on the market such as Sounds Scary® CD. You would start by playing the noises very softly. You would then practice having your pet go to the safe spot or redirection activities by playing with your dog, giving him a puzzle toy or other activity to do. Once your pet does not act nervous at a lower volume gradually increase the volume of the noise.

Remember, ignoring your pet, if they are showing extreme anxiety, will not treat the problem and can make your pet's anxiety worse. Make sure you consult your veterinarian on the correct plan for your pet.

Disclaimer: This written content is meant to be educational and is not medical advice. Always consult a veterinarian about medical advice for your pet.