

# THUNDERSTORMS



Many pets experience fear during thunderstorms. You may notice that your dog starts to react to a storm approaching before you are even aware that one is developing. This is likely because animals have an increased sensitivity to changes in air pressure that precede a storm.

## Is my dog scared during a storm?

Many animals who are frightened during thunderstorms also have other types of noise sensitivities and may even have developed anxiety about being left alone as a result of a storm rolling through while their owners were out.

Some common signs of distress in dogs are:

- Increased panting
- Yawning
- Pacing
- Salivating
- Trembling
- Whining and/or howling
- Seeking comfort from a person or place where they feel secure

Symptoms can range from mild distress to severe panic episodes where a dog may cause structural damage or self-harm in an attempt to relieve their anxiety.

## How can you help your dog?

Dogs who suffer from storm phobia may need help to reduce their fear and panic before they can start to learn that thunderstorms aren't so scary. We recommend consulting a qualified Veterinarian for advice as a first step.

## Create a calm environment

Make sure that your pet has a secure place (such as a laundry lined with comfy bedding or their crate) available to retreat to when they start to worry. You can create a positive association with your chosen space by feeding your dog yummy treats and spending time there when the weather is fine. This makes it more likely that your dog will seek out this spot when feeling anxious. You may find that your dog chooses their own place where they feel safe such as on or under your bed. It is important not to remove your pet or force them out into the open.

## Comfort your dog

If possible, plan to have someone home with your pet when the storm arrives.

You can help your dog to relax by:

- Playing classical music or an audiobook.
- Using calm, gentle massage with long, slow strokes to help your dog relax.
- Engaging in normal activities such as playing games or providing a long-lasting chew.
- You can purchase **Adaptil** collars and diffusers that can help to reduce anxiety by releasing synthetic pheromones which are comforting to dogs and puppies.
- Natural supplements like **Zylkene** can be helpful to reduce stress in dogs and cats when given before a storm arrives.

## Desensitisation

If your dog is sensitive to the sound of thunder, it is possible to help reduce anxiety using a desensitisation process.

- Start by playing a recording of a thunderstorm at a barely audible volume and feed your dog treats or play a game that they enjoy.
- Over a period several weeks the goal is to gradually increase the volume while ensuring that your dog remains calm and comfortable throughout the sessions.

An experienced trainer will be able to help you with this process while keeping a close eye on your dog's comfort levels.

## Training Puppies

Teach your puppy to ignore the weather from an early age by engaging in a game or helping them settle with a Kong or long-lasting chew as a storm approaches.