



10 Tips for Managing Your Dog's Fear of

THUNDERSTORMS



Although thunderstorms can instill fear, dogs can be trained to manage their reactions and feel calmer through all the noise and bright flashes. Thunderstorms are a common fear in dogs, causing many to panic and run away, become destructive, or even hurt themselves. Dogs can sense a storm's approach by the rapidly falling barometric pressure, and they can begin to show signs of anxiety even before the storm can be heard.

Follow these tips to help your dog learn to be relaxed during storms, fireworks or other loud disturbances that may be frightening to him.

- 1.** Always keep proper identification securely fastened to your dog's collar in case he gets out. Consider talking to your veterinarian about implanting a universal microchip in your pet for lifelong identification. Remember to update your veterinary clinic and animal shelter with your correct contact information.
- 2.** Give your dog a safe place to stay during storms. Inside your home, create a quiet den-like area where your dog can feel secure. A properly introduced crate or kennel can be a calming refuge for him. When a storm is brewing, lead your dog to his special place to help him feel calm and protected.
- 3.** If your dog lives outside cover his kennel or dog run with a blanket to shield him from the bursts of lightning. Outside dogs can get lost or even injured if they escape their fenced yards in fear during storms.
- 4.** Dogs can pick up fear or discomfort with storms from their family pack members, so it is important that you develop a calm, matter-of-fact attitude. Let your dog stay close and try to distract him with activities like play or brushing. Do not try to reassure him in a sympathetic voice—this will sound like praise and may increase his nervousness and confusion.
- 5.** Some dogs become destructive when frightened. A crate is always the best way to keep your dog safe and your belongings intact. If you don't use a crate, remove any items in the room your dog could destroy or could hurt him if he chewed them.
- 6.** During a storm, keep windows and curtains closed to reduce noise and bright flashes. Turn on a TV or radio playing soft music at normal volume to distract your dog and help him to relax.
- 7.** Keep your dog away from doors that lead outside. Your dog may be under significant stress, which could result in unnecessary injury to others entering your home or cause him to dart outside and get lost or injured.
- 8.** Your dog may become incontinent due to his extreme fear and the rush of adrenaline he experiences during a storm. Be prepared for this, and don't react if it occurs.
- 9.** Dogs that continue to panic in thunderstorms may have to be reconditioned by creating an artificial storm with environmental recordings. While reconditioning can be a time-consuming procedure, it can have a high success rate. A Bark Busters Dog Behaviour Therapist can help your dog be calmer during thunder storms.
- 10.** In the most extreme cases, medication in conjunction with training may be the best solution to help your dog cope with his fear of storms. Consult with your veterinarian about possible treatments.

Your dog's phobia about thunderstorms won't get better on its own. Help him learn that it's just noise and is nothing for him to worry about. When he learns to relax and remain calm, you can relax and not worry about your dog during future storms.

