

## Storm and firework anxiety



From the canine perspective, loud, unpredictable noises accompanied by bright lights are threatening and a cause for alarm. Some dogs react as if their very life hangs in the balance. Thankfully, it doesn't have to be that way. Here are some ways to help your dog keep calm.

- 1) You can drown out loud noises and naturally calm your canine by playing dampening music, such as classical ABC, HUSH music, and calming music (we like Icalmdog on Spotify!). You can also use white noise, running water and fans. For severe cases using sound cancelling products like happy hoodies or muttmuffs, or even using cotton wool balls down the ears (it is very important to remember to remove them) can help.
- 2) The hug of a compression garment, such as a Thundershirt, creates a feeling of wellbeing for some dogs. They mimic the soothing effect of cuddling for an infant. They may not work for all dogs, but when they do the results are profound. Some of these garments may include vibrations or music to further calm your dog.
- 3) Allow your dog to hide in a dark quiet space if they wish. Some dogs may want to retreat under the bed, or to a similar "cave". Close the curtains to reduce sound and light, but turn on the lights so any lightning has a reduced effect. Gently encourage your dog to come out on their own with a treat or toy, but don't try to pull them out. A fearful dog may bite if cornered and confronted.
- 4) For some dogs, the calm presence of their beloved human or animal friends is a confidence boost in stressful situations. Reassure your dog with long calming strokes. Keep your voice relaxed, low and calm. If thunderstorms make you anxious, you and your dog are not ideal companions during a storm – you will increase your dog's anxiety!
- 5) Pheromones are scents that carry an emotional message for animals. Adaptil is a synthetic pheromone that helps dogs to feel calm and relaxed. Using an Adaptil diffuser, collar or spray may reduce your dog's anxiety.

6) Don't take your dog out with you to firework displays. This is not only for your dog's safety and the safety of others, but also to prevent further negative emotional impact.

7) We are here to help! If your dog is upset with fireworks or storms despite these tips, talk to your vet about medication to reduce anxiety. There are several different types of medications that can be used, and so a consultation is recommended to help choose the best strategy for your dog. In some cases, combination therapy will be required.

