



Paula Bumpers, DVM
Jennifer Heim, DVM
303-948-5000

7 Tips for Pets Afraid of Storms and Fireworks

Thunderstorms, hurricanes, windstorms and tornados are not always predictable, making storm phobia a particularly difficult fear to treat in pets, and for owners whose pets exhibit these fears, it can be equally distressing. Not only do the pets show signs of nervousness (pacing, panting, chewing and drooling), they will also display behavioral signs (hiding, owner seeking, trembling, vocalizing, trying to escape and destruction), which can be even more upsetting, and even dangerous as phobic dogs have been known to break through screen doors or windows in an attempt to escape, causing serious injury to themselves.



Tips to keep your pet calm and safe during storms or fireworks:

1. Leave your pets at home and indoors. Most pets are afraid and may try to run away.
2. Close all doors and windows and put on background music to muffle the sound.
3. Close curtains and blinds to block the lightning or fireworks.
4. Be sure that your pets are wearing identification tags or have microchips in case they do run away or get lost.
5. Try to distract your pet with chew toys and games, or play with another pet that does not share his/her fear. **Do not comfort your dog or cat, as this reinforces their fearful behavior!**
6. If you have time, desensitization techniques with appropriate sound CDs, such as thunder, fireworks, trains, sirens, etc. may help pets get use to the sounds at a lower volume, then as they become more comfortable, gradually increase the volume.
7. If your pet has storm phobias, there are several prescriptions available to reduce your pet's anxiety during the storm season. We can prescribe Xanax for situational use, or Prozac for the storm season. Both drugs seem to help, but work best in conjunction with the above techniques. There is also a natural remedy that may help called Rescue Remedy, which can be obtained at Vitamin Cottage. Please don't hesitate to ask if you have further questions.