

Summer is thunderstorm season in Brisbane so here are some tips to keep your pets safe and sound

Somewhere Safe

Make sure your dog has somewhere safe to retreat– a crate or den area, somewhere they like to go. If it's under the bed or on the bed, fine. Try to block out the lightning flashes if possible as many dogs will react to these as they predict thunder. A cover over a crate is a great idea. Make sure your pet has a good association with their crate or den area, so spend a bit of time building up the time they spend in there, pair it with food etc. You will be surprised that many pets will seek out that safe space in a storm. Refer to our 'crate training' and 'denning' info sheets.

Pheromone Therapy

Dog Appeasing Pheromone (Adaptil) is a synthetic copy of the pheromone the lactating female dog produces when she is feeding puppies. It has been proven to help dogs in a range of challenging situations including thunderstorms. Feliway is the cat pheromone product. They can be purchased online or through your vet.

Thundershirts or Anxiety wraps

These look like dog jackets and apply gently pressure to the body. Experts believe that pressure has a calming effect on the nervous system, possibly by releasing a calming hormone like endorphins. Using gentle pressure to relieve anxiety in people and animals has been a common practice for years. These can work well to settle some dogs and cats.

TTouch and TTouch Body Wraps.

Our very own Ros Taber is a TTouch practitioner and can help you with your dog by teaching you a series of specific touches and body wraps to use on your dog, especially when they are stressed or anxious. Remember to use your ear TTouces to help calm your dog before during and after the storms. Body wraps are the original thunder shirts and can be applied quickly and easily at any time.

Herbal Remedies and Flower Essences

There are a number of calming remedies you can purchase that may help your dog during stressful times. Some we have found that may be worth a try are:

Blackmores PAW Multi+Tryptophan Chews

Greenpet Flower Essence and Herbal Remedies www.greenpet.com.au

Natural Animal Solutions Calm www.naturalanimalsolutions.com.au

Rescue Remedy www.bachflower.com

Homeopathic Formulas

See a holistic vet or qualified naturopath for specific information on combinations of homeopathic products to help your pet during storms.

Eliminating Static Electricity

Research has shown that dogs sense the static charge build up before a thunderstorm. Some people have reported they have used anti-static cloths to wipe over their dog during storms and had some success. You can also try anti-static spray.

There is also a product called the Storm Defender Cape. This cape has a special metallic lining that discharges a dog's fur and shields them from the static charge build up reducing sensitivity to the charge. Find out more including how to order at www.stormdefender.com

Using Music to Calm

Research has shown that music has an effect on the nervous system. Through a Dogs Ear uses psychoacoustic techniques that naturally trigger the relaxation or arousal response. Further research has helped us understand that classical music had a marked soothing effect on dogs in animal shelters. You can purchase specially designed CD's for your pets that may help them during times of stress. For more info check out www.throughadogsear.com

Training

For mild or moderate cases of thunderstorm phobia, our approach is to use Classical Conditioning. This is a fancy phrase for pairing something your pet loves with a very mild or damped down version of what scares them. Your goal is to condition your dog to associate thunder with something he loves, so his emotional response to thunder is "woohoo!" rather than "oh no!"

For example if your dog loves playing ball, when the storm is only just approaching, go outside and have a fun game.

There are some good CD's available that have recordings of thunder and other scary noises that you can use.

If you have a new puppy or young dog, make sure you use recorded sounds to desensitise them to scary sounds early. The Sound Proof Puppy App available to download from itunes or google play is a great resource. If your dog is experiencing severe thunderstorm phobia and is trying to escape or causing himself injury, please see a veterinary behaviourist. Also, before starting any homeopathic or herbal remedies, please consult with your vet.

Good luck through the storm season and we hope some of these ideas help you and your pets. Contact us if you need further help!