



Help Your Dog Cope with Thunder and Fireworks

Firework and thunder season are almost here. It's so difficult to watch our beloved pups suffer from noise phobias. Luckily, there are some steps you can take to help your canine companion cope:

Prepare: First, keep your dog indoors and stay home with him, when possible. A panicked dog will try to escape, which is why shelters are so full in the days following fireworks and big storms. Muffle noise outside with the radio, television, or white noise at a slightly higher level than normal. If your dog seeks out small spaces like their crate or under the bed, make sure they have free access before noises start. Some dogs will even climb in the bathtub during storms.

Spot Early Warning Signs: Long before your dog panics, you will see signs of increasing stress. These include pacing or panting when not hot or active, low tail position, and ears pinned back. If you see these signs, pull out the treats and practice tricks or even just toss them across the room for your dog to chase. If fetch is their thing, that's good, too! These fun activities can distract your dog and minimize stress.

A Little Help from Pavlov: A great way to help your dog is to teach them that loud noises mean good things. Follow each firework or thunder sound with a treat – make it extra good! Over time, your dog can learn that BOOM = good stuff. You can start this exercise any time of year by practicing this exercise to sounds on your computer, which can better prepare your dog for next year.

It's Okay to Comfort Your Dog: If your dog comes to you when the noise starts, it's okay to reassure them. It will not "reinforce their fear!" However, if they are seeking out small spaces away from you, petting isn't likely to help. Stay nearby and do your best to minimize the noise outside. Let your dog tell you what he needs.

Have a Backup Plan: For some dogs, these events are just too stressful for any of these plans to help. If your dog won't eat his favorite treats or play with toys, his stress is too high. Do the best you can to keep him calm, quiet, and safe.

Talk to Your Veterinarian: If your dog's reaction is severe, you may need to explore anti-anxiety medications during these events. Talk to your veterinarian about options for your dog.

Finally, remember that even though we know the thunder and fireworks can't hurt us, the fear is very real to your dog. Do whatever you can to help them feel safe and comfortable.

If you would like advice on how to help your dog, contact the Dumb Friends League Behavior Helpline and speak with one of our behavior specialists. This free service is available to anyone, even if you did not adopt your pet from the League.