



Fear of Thunderstorms

This time of year, storms seem to occur daily in Florida. If you have a dog that is afraid of thunder, it can be a stressful time of year. There are various reasons that a dog may have these fears: the noise, static in the air, change of barometric pressure, scents, bad experiences and genetics are all possible factors. A frightened dog may attempt to, harm themselves, and/or cause damage to your home. Before or during the storm, your dog may show signs of stress by:

- Panting
- Pacing
- Scratch or cling to you
- Trembling
- Hiding, sometimes in small, tight spaces
- Drooling
- Dilated pupils



What should I do?

- Do not leave your dog outside- one should never leave a dog outside unattended but it would be especially dangerous during a storm.
- Your dog will take you to the place in the home that he feels the safest. Turn this into his haven by being present with him, put his favorite blanket down. Have a very high value food present that you can hand feed. If he is less stressed, he can have the food treats to make it a better experience. You can even begin rewarding before a storm hits. NEVER force the dog to eat: that would be a punishment, not a reward.
- Stay by your dog's side. If you give your dog confidence, don't leave him alone in his time of need. By being present, you will offer reassurance. Do not scold or ignore your dog.

- Calming products may help, especially if incorporated before the storm occurs. Items such as: a Thundershirt (www.thundershirt.com) flower essence drops, and DAP products can make the experience less stressful.
- Put the TV or radio on to help block out the sounds of the storm
- If the anxiety is not extreme work on simple obedience cues that your dog enjoys.
- You can purchase or download sounds of storms to play at a low volume and desensitize. This has mixed results, especially depending on the reason for the fear.
- If anxiety is severe, you may want to discuss medical options with your vet in conjunction with behavior modification with a qualified behaviorist. Contact us for a list of trained professionals.

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