

# Is Your Dog Afraid of Thunderstorms?

July 30, 2010



NEW YORK (RPRN) 07/30/10 — Picture this: As the skies darken overhead, an otherwise amiable dog is panting and pacing around the house with his tail tucked between his legs. When the first crash of thunder hits, he bolts into the bathroom and curls up tightly in the tub, where he remains, panting and trembling, until the storm passes. Sound familiar? Does your dog behave this way during storms? Not to worry, pet parents, the ASPCA has some advice for helping your pooch overcome his fear.

Any dog can develop a fear of thunderstorms, but herding breeds seem more susceptible to developing noise phobias. Age is another risk factor: Dogs who are afraid of thunderstorms can become more distressed with each successive season, so it's smart to start working with your dog as soon as you notice his fearful behavior. If your adult dog has suddenly become afraid of storms, please start with a visit to your vet. A sick dog may become more sensitive to sounds, and no amount of behavior modification will help if your dog's fear is medically based.

Try the following strategies to reduce your dog's anxiety during storms. For dogs with mild thunderstorm phobia, these tricks may get rid of the problem entirely.

Let your dog take refuge inside. Storms aren't as loud and scary with four walls around you! Bringing your dog into the house also ensures that he won't try to escape from the yard. Having some human company often calms panicked dogs. If your calm, quiet touch brings him comfort or if he comes to you for security, it's perfectly fine to pet and reassure him. Try turning on some calming music, a TV or radio, or a fan to muffle storm noises. Shutting the drapes may help if lightning also frightens your dog.

More active distractions may help, too. See if your dog will eat from a food-filled toy, such as a [stuffed Kong](#), scatter treats in the house for him to find, or try playing tug or fetch with his favorite toy. If your dog's quality of life is seriously impaired by thunderstorms, consider speaking with a vet about [anti-anxiety medication](#). Medication can enhance the effectiveness of other efforts to help your dog cope with his fear. A technique called [desensitization and counterconditioning](#) can also help. This technique involves gradually increasing the volume of an audio recording of a thunderstorm to help your dog become accustomed to it, while at the same time associating the sound of thunder with good things, like treats and toys. Additionally, there are a number of products on the market that may help your dog remain calm during storms, including close-fitting body wraps, noise-reducing headphones and herbal remedies.

Help is just around the corner! Please visit the [ASPCA's Virtual Behaviorist](#) for more advice and useful resources.

**Media Contact Name:** ASPCA

**Media E-mail:** [press@aspc.org](mailto:press@aspc.org)

**Media Phone:** (212) 876-7700 ext. 4450

**Media Web Address:** <http://www.aspc.org/news/national/07-30-10.html#1>

**Company E-mail:** [outreach@aspc.org](mailto:outreach@aspc.org)

**About the author:**

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