



# STORM AND NOISE PHOBIAS

If your pet is frightened of storms or loud noises then we can help you with some strategies to assist you during these stressful times. As we cannot always avoid storms and noise, knowing about upcoming weather patterns and events can help you prepare to minimise stimuli and improve security.

## **What to do:**

1. Try to be at home when there is a trigger for stress. Up to 90% of dogs with separation anxiety have other phobias and storm phobia is one of the most common.
2. Create a safe secure environment for your pet whether this be a chosen hiding place (if it is safe), designated room or crate/bed.
3. Use a darkened or windowless room to reduce sound and lightning exposure.
4. Using ear covers (Mutt Muffs), sound muting cage covers and sound proof rooms can help. We must note that dogs with storm phobias may not have noise phobias and vice versa. The change in barometric pressure may be the trigger for your dog.
5. Play loud music that has a strong beat or white noise to muffle outside noises.
6. Play games and practice obedience to distract your pet. Using a food puzzle is great for food orientated dogs, especially if you cannot be at home.
7. Pre-train your dog to settle on a mat, bed or crate and use this as a strategy to calm your pet. This can be then used as a mobile calming spot and taken places.
8. Some pets may respond to an anxiety wrap or wearing a head collar and leash.
9. Using dog appeasing pheromone (DAP) or Feliway pheromone has been shown to be efficacious.

## **What not to do:**

1. Do not punish your pet as this will increase distress.
2. Do not praise or encourage your pet as this will be seen as a reward for the anxious behaviour. However, adding something to make the pet cope better would be beneficial such as speaking to your pet in calm voice, stroking or providing body contact. Think of soothing rather than praise.
3. Remain calm yourself as your pet will likely respond to your emotions.

Desensitisation, counterconditioning, relaxation exercises and anxiolytic medications may be appropriate in some cases.

It is best to make a plan for your dog as soon as possible as these behaviours can get exaggerated over time and exposure to a storm is not the same as desensitisation. Training a pet to accept a phobia can take time and effort but the reward is to create a better quality of life for your pet and prevent self-injury.

It is our goal at The Pet Practice is to provide you with the tools to achieve this. Please contact us if you require help for your pet during situational anxiety or other behavioural concerns.