

Storm Fear Recommendations

By Peggy Barrasso

It is a common issue and one that has a lot of different remedies. Below is information from various resources and a lot of advice from the Big Fluffy fosters. There is no one thing that will work for every dog, so you may need to try different things to find the right one. The most important thing you can do, suggested by one of our fosters, is "Whatever you try, it is VERY IMPORTANT to get out ahead of the panic if you possibly can. Don't wait for the pacing and trembling to begin.

The behavioral plan to put in place is:

1. change their behavior towards the thunder (Counter Classical Conditioning)
2. create a safe place during storms
3. provide calming therapy (oils, calming treats, thunder shirts etc.)

Exercise/Play/High Value Food/Treats

If you know a storm is approaching, take your dog for a long walk to calm him and tire him out way before the storm strikes.

Keep their mind occupied with frozen Kongs (Kong filled with Xylitol free 100% natural peanut butter or cream cheese mixed with kibble and frozen), marrow bones and toys. Try to find an activity that will turn your dog's attention away from the storm.

Block the Noise Outside & Up the Noise Inside

Put cotton in their ears to reduce noise. Put the Cotton balls in a knee-high stocking and then tie the stocking off and cut off the extra and then put the cotton ball package in the ears. It makes it easier to take out.

Shut the windows and curtains.

Purchase a High-Velocity Floor Fan (not a box fan). On high, it is LOUD and will do an awesome job blocking noise outside while keeping pups cool!

Turn the TV on loud with cartoons.

HoMedics SoundSpa Portable Sound Machine at Walmart on high will block noise outside.

Play Doggie Calming Music:

Through a dog's Ear: <http://throughadogsear.com/>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=joe-ePgCqWc&sns=fb>

Provide a Safe Refuge (very important)

Find a small "safe spot" for the dog to hide. Ideally, this spot will block light and noise, while allowing the dog to be near its owner. Here are a few options:

- Under a table or bed
- In a dog crate, with a blanket draped over it (do NOT close door)
- In a closet or windowless bathroom with blankets and pillows with door open.
- In the tub because it helps with static in the air

Change Dog's Behavior towards Thunder (Counter Classic Conditioning)

Canine Noise Phobia Music Series

<https://positively.com/dog-wellness/dog-enrichment/music-for-dogs/canine-noise-phobia-series/>

The dog first learns to associate positive feelings with the music on the CD. Once he is calm and relaxed, specific sound effect noises (fireworks, thunderstorms, and city sounds) are slowly introduced alongside the music at gradually increasing levels while the owner continues to provide positive experiences. Eventually, the dog can function normally despite the presence of a previously offending noise or sound.

Conditioning Tips from a foster: Reconditioning is using a treat, given when the thunder claps. Each time, during a storm. The dog will learn to associate storms with treats, aka good stuff, instead of the scary loud stuff, aka thunder. The first time I did this she actually went to sleep during the storm. That was from panicky and uncontrollably shaking. Now she just gets a little nervous and wants to be next to a human or maybe safe behind the couch. But no panic, no shaking. It took a total of 3 storms for her to be conditioned.

De-stress Your Dog (chewy.com has a lot of the products)

Block the SHOCK

The static they literally FEEL because of their coat is a strong discomfort. Wipe your dog down with antistatic, 100% natural, fragrance free laundry sheets. Mist your dog with water from a spray bottle, spray the underside of your dog's paws with anti-static spray.

Pheromone Therapy (<http://dogappeasingpheromone.com/>)

VetriScience Composure Behavioral Health Bite-Sized Dog Chews

I swear by this for my girls though (they have liquid form as well)

Pet Naturals of Vermont Calming Dog Chews

I give these as daily treats and it totally takes the edge off for them. Use earlier in the day before a storm or vet visit or anything scary.

Richard's Organics Pet Calm

Adaptil calming collar

Melatonin (<http://canigivemydog.com/melatonin>)

Melatonin dose is 3 mg for dogs 25-100 pounds. For dogs under 25, give 1.5 mg. For dogs over 100, give 3 to 6 mg

L-Theanine (<https://doghealthcoach.com/medicine/l-theanine-for-dogs/>)

I use this for my foster to aid in his general attitude. We've just ordered our second bottle from Amazon, since it really seems to be helping. It did take about 5 weeks to really notice a difference, using one capsule twice a day.

Thundershirt (www.thundershirt.com) *Make your own. See below.*

Rescue Remedy (<http://www.bachflower.com/rescue-remedy-pets-bach-flower/>)

I highly recommend Rescue Remedy in combination with Melatonin. I also recommend ignoring dosage instructions on the box and squirting at least half a dropper directly into the mouth. Also, getting out ahead of anticipated weather by at least 20 minutes.

The directions say to give 1 dropper full per 10#. I did not follow that. I had to play around with dosing, and I ended up giving him 1/2 dropper full 2x day in his food. If storms were coming, I would give a whole dropper full. I also used melatonin tablets available at PetCo.

Bach Essence Rock Rose addresses extreme fear and panic (www.bachflower.com)

Essential Oils (<http://bit.ly/BigFluffyOils>)

Many fosters use Lavender and Stress Away. You can diffuse or put 2 drops in your palm, rub and pat on your dog. "I use Stress Away and Lavender. I Diffuse it, spray it on her fur, mixed with water, AND rub it on my own wrists and put it beneath her nose for an added boost. Our dog went from a panting, drooling, shaking mess to a calm, relaxed dog during storms! You MUST use high quality oils like Young Living (and not the cheap stuff) or it won't help." All purchases made through the link above send a commission to Big Fluffy Dog Rescue, too!

Additional Resources:

Noise-Phobic Dogs, Whole Dog Journal,

https://www.whole-dog-journal.com/issues/3_5/features/Supplements-For-Anxious-Dogs_5095-1.html

Thunder Phobia in Dogs (Patricia is TOP behaviorist in country)

<https://www.patriciamcconnell.com/theotherendoftheleash/thunder-phobia-in-dogs>

Therapeutic Pet Wrap

Here is a very simple way to keep your dog from having a nervous breakdown during thunderstorm or firework displays! This even helps dogs who are nervous when riding in the car or going to a vet office. It's a very calming technique that helps them to stay relaxed and feel safe. All you need to apply this technique is a simple scarf or piece of fabric. You start wrapping

at the chest, cross in the back at the withers, bring the ends underneath the chest, crossing them and back up & tie into place (just to the side of the spine). You don't want to put any pressure on the spine. This is essentially a hug and is the next best thing to having your arms around your pet. Please note that it says to tie to the side of the spine, do not tie directly over the spine.

