

Dogs and Thunderstorms



Adelaide often has thunderstorms roll over. And like everybody else, my social feeds are full of lost dogs who have gotten scared of the noises and reacted by running away from home. Depending on the time of year I will have a lot of clients asking about storm phobia or not very many. But really, it's something I need to ask pet owners about all year round. Because the earlier we try to deal with the problem, the better chance we have of getting a result.

The very best way to deal with thunderstorms and thunder phobia and all noise phobias is to start a program of desensitisation this teaches them to deal with the anxiety and actually help your pet understand that it doesn't need to be a scary time. The problem is it can be tricky and it takes a lot of work.

Puppies between 8 and 16 weeks. Most puppies go through a period where they are receptive to experiencing new things. A weekly job for pet owners of puppies should be playing a loud thunderstorm track and playing games with their puppy making it a safe, normal time rather than a scary time. We don't want them to think that every thunderstorm is time for a play but we do want them to be ok with it. Online you can find a plethora of different soundtracks of loud scary noises that you can use to acclimatise your pup.

If you have an older dog that has shown some anxiety or reactivity to thunderstorms. You can also start their desensitisation at any time. The more often you do it, the better their response. Ideally, we start very quietly so the dog doesn't even notice it. Slowly increase the volume to the point where you can see that they notice it. Maybe they are pricking their ears or maybe their eyes are widening a little bit, reduce the volume, wait until they're calm and then reward them.

When a storm is rolling in, and you can see your pet is worried try and distract them. Shut off as much of the outside inputs as you can, pull the curtains shut, play some loud music. I find a nice big stodgy meal will help calm a lot of animals. Try to keep them away from anywhere they might injure themselves. And obviously, if you have an escape artist make sure that they're safely restrained.

If your pet is experiencing severe thunder phobia, medications are definitely available for your pet. We have a number of options now that aren't just based on sedation but they are anxiolytics and will reduce your pet's stress levels too. They will also help them forget scary times so every storm doesn't get worse.

**Is your pet up to date with their preventatives?
Have you noticed any new lumps on your pet's skin that you are worried about?
Book an appointment now by calling us on 8265 3399
or by visiting our website (ttgvvet.com.au) and using the 'Book Now' button.**