

Comfort & Pain Relief

My Dog is Scared of Noises — What Can I Do?



Noise aversion, or the set of anxiety or fear-based behaviors displayed when subjected to “noise triggers”, is a common problem for dogs. In fact, in a recent survey, 67% of dogs exhibit at least one sign of noise aversion¹.

This fear of noises can negatively affect your dog’s quality of life. Noise phobias increase stress in dogs, which can lead to several problems, like diarrhea, destructive behaviors, and even self-injury.

Your dog might show you that they’re scared of noises in a variety of ways.

Signs of noise aversion in dogs²:

- Pacing or restlessness
- Lip licking
- Trembling or shaking
- Panting
- Excessive alertness or hypervigilance
- Cowering
- Hiding
- Brow furrowed or ears back
- Freezing or immobility
- Owner seeking behavior or excessive clinginess
- Refusing to eat
- Yawning
- Vocalizing (whining or barking at the sounds)
- Escape behaviors

You may not recognize these behaviors as signs that your dog is frightened by the noise, so use this checklist (<https://www.sileodogus.com/canine-noise-aversion.aspx>) to see if your dog suffers from noise aversion. Take it to your

veterinarian so that your dog can be diagnosed and start to receive treatment.

Things you can do at home to help calm a dog scared of noises:

- **Mask the noise.** Play music, TV, audiobooks, or white noise to mask and drown out the noises they're afraid of.
- **Limit visual stimulation.** During fireworks or thunder, close the curtains and keep the room brightly lit to reduce the flashing that goes along with the sound.
- **Set up a safe space.** Encourage your dog to go to an area such as a basement, closet, or bathroom, where the noise is not as loud. These areas can be safe havens for your dog; once the noise begins, your dog can retreat to this area and feel relatively safe. By feeding your dog treats or putting their favorite toys in the designated safe haven in between noise events, you can get your dog accustomed to going to these areas.
- **Be present.** Your presence is comforting to your dog.
- **Act normal.** Rather than paying attention to the noise, play with your dog, read a book or watch TV. Try not to get worked up or anxious yourself, as your dog can sense and feed off of your anxiety.
- **Distract them.** You can try to distract them from the noise by feeding them, having them work on a puzzle toy, giving them treats, or working on training.

If your dog typically gets scared during certain events (such as thunder or fireworks), you can proactively begin counterconditioning and desensitization training to help them get more comfortable and accepting of the sounds. Ask your veterinarian for help with implementing these techniques.

These recommendations will help you and your dog cope better during the noise event. But since noise aversion is itself a medical condition, your veterinarian, may also recommend medications to treat noise aversion.

Medications to help your dog cope with noise aversion

It is important to speak to your veterinarian about your dog's noise aversion, because dogs do not outgrow this condition and without treatment, the signs can get worse or your dog may develop additional behavioral problems. Additionally, it is important to realize that while your dog is showing signs of noise aversion, they are experiencing something like a person having a panic

attack. In other words, they are distressed and suffering. Although modifying your home and using behavior modification techniques can help, medication can be one of the most humane, easiest, and most effective ways to help improve your dog's quality of life.

Learn more at zoetispetcare.com

1. The Harris Poll: Custom Motion Sickness and Noise Aversion Omnibus Pet Owner Quantitative Research Report, December 2018.
 2. Zoetis: Foster Rosenblatt Noise Aversion Research; February 5th, 2016.
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