

Comfort & Pain Relief

Managing Your Dog's Thunder Anxiety



Is your dog afraid of thunder? At least two-thirds of dogs suffer from noise aversion¹, a fear and anxiety condition of loud noises — such as thunder, fireworks, celebrations, or traffic noise — that leads to distress, suffering, and potentially-destructive behavior^{2,3}. Although destructive behavior is one of the more obvious signs of noise aversion, there are several other signs (such as those listed below).

The signs of noise aversion:

- 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)

Why is it important to know if your dog has noise aversion?

Noise aversion negatively impacts your dog's quality of life and mental health. When a dog with noise aversion hears thunder or another loud noise, the fear and anxiety that they experience is similar to what a person feels like when they're having a panic attack. If not addressed early, the signs can progress to destructive behaviors such as scratching on doors or walls, jumping through windows or glass doors, or digging under or jumping over yard fences. If they escape from your house, they could end up in a shelter, lost, or injured. Even if

your dog does not show these more severe signs, the fear and anxiety that they feel during the noise event is distressful and causes your dog to suffer.

While you may think that your dog's negative response to thunder is normal, noise aversion is not—it's a medical condition that has a significant emotional impact on your dog. Delaying the diagnosis and treatment of your dog's aversion to thunder can increase both the frequency and severity of your dog's signs^{2,3}, worsen your dog's quality of life, and result in the development of other anxieties. It also puts a strain on the bond between your family and your dog.

Sadly, even though their dogs outwardly show such a negative reaction to noises like thunder or fireworks, only 40% of pet owners discuss their dog's noise aversion with their veterinarian². Make sure that you discuss your dog's reaction to thunder or other noises at your next visit. Your veterinarian can provide treatment recommendations to help your dog cope with these noise-related fears and help them, and you, live peacefully through whatever noise triggers their fear and anxiety. To see if your dog has noise aversion, use our interactive noise aversion checklist (<https://www.sileodogus.com/canine-noise-aversion.aspx>). You can then print and take the results of the checklist to your veterinarian to discuss next steps.

Steps to manage your dog's thunder anxiety

Once you've discussed your dog's unique noise-related symptoms with your veterinarian and they've confirmed the diagnosis, they'll likely recommend treatment with medication that can be given to your dog before or as thunder occurs. This can help provide your dog with more immediate relief as you work on the other important steps discussed below.

Your vet will also recommend things you can do to help your dog from reacting as strongly to thunder, like working on behavior modification techniques such as systematic desensitization and counterconditioning. It's often best to work with a board-certified veterinary behaviorist or a rewards-based trainer for the behavior modification (you can ask your veterinarian for a recommendation). Aids like anti-anxiety clothing may be recommended, as well.

You can also help your dog with their thunder anxiety at home by reducing your dog's exposure to the noise and creating a safe space from the noise during thunderstorms. Practice the "go to" cue with your dog before thunderstorm season, so when thunderstorms occur, your dog can head to a quieter space in your home.

Since each dog's reaction to noise is different and treatment should be tailored to the individual, your veterinarian is best suited to determine an individualized treatment plan for each dog that has noise aversion.

Use the noise aversion checklist at sileodogus.com/canine-noise-aversion.aspx

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
 3. Shull-Selcer EA, Stagg W. Advances in the understanding and treatment of noise phobias. Vet Clin Nor Amer: Small Anim Pract. 1991;21(2):353-367.
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