

This time of year can be quite difficult for many of our pets. The dreaded holiday – the Fourth of July – is quickly approaching. And with the longer days and the changes in the weather comes a huge fear for many of us and our pets: thunderstorms. The noise, lightening, and air pressure changes can be too much for some dogs, sending them quaking in fear. Some dogs bark, whine, or pace. And while it can be difficult for us, because we can't explain that they're safe, there are some solutions to help everyone get through it.

Our top solutions:

Thundershirt - Similar to swaddling a baby, the Thundershirt exerts a gentle, constant pressure to help calm and relax your dog. It is vet recommended, drug free, and easy to use. Read more [here](#).



HerbSmith Calm Shen - This calming blend of Chinese herbs help maintain relaxation and relieve stress by bringing the body back into natural balance. Calm Shen is not an immediate solution, as it needs time to become effective, so start using it when the weather begins to warm up and use the whole time they may be exposed to thunder. See the ingredients and the theory behind Chinese medicine [here](#).

Sentry Calming collars - Sentry calming collar contains pheromones, natural scentless chemical messengers, mimics of ones mother dogs produce that calm their puppies. They are clinically proven effective to reduce stress, have a pleasant lavender and chamomile scent, and last for 30 days.



CBD oil and treats – CBD oil is gaining popularity for helping relieve a whole range of issues, including stress – and there's real science behind it. CBD oil is from the hemp plant, and contains no psychoactive THC, so it doesn't get your dog high or loopy. Inside all mammals is an intricate network of receptors, found predominantly in the brain, immune, digestive, and peripheral nervous systems. When the CBD binds with these receptors, it helps bring the body back into balance, and, most importantly, relieves stress and anxiety. Takes about an hour for the effects to begin, so start it early.



Some tips that can help:

1. Helping your dog handle thunderstorms begins well before any storm comes. There are some things you can do to help prepare them for it - starting to calm them as the thunder booms is not going to be nearly as effective.

Start them as young as possible. Practice getting your dog to settle on command; use a special inside leash and teach them to lie calmly at your feet. Praise and treat them when they are calm. When they learn the routine, it helps them know what to do when the storm comes up. Getting them used to their crate helps give them a sense of security later when they need it.

Some desensitize their pets to thunderstorms by playing CDs of thunderstorm recordings and getting them used to it. Do it during quiet times (like the winter) and slowly increase the volume over time while rewarding their calm behavior. It does only address one of the aspects of storms that can bother dogs, but it can still help reduce their stress.

2. Communicate in a way that our dogs understand. Dogs take their cues on how to act from the most important person in their life: YOU. We all have this natural reaction when our dogs are nervous or afraid to speak to them in a soft, high pitch voice. To other people that sounds comforting and reassuring. To a dog, though, you now sound nervous and afraid, so they become more anxious. One dog trainer we've worked in the past recommends, especially for her female clients, to drop their voice an octave or two, and to speak very calmly and matter-of-fact. Now, since you sound calm and collected, your dog can relax some, too.

This technique even works when scared and nervous dogs come in to the store. Nervous dogs often change their demeanor and body language when a deeper, less nervous sounding voice is used.

3. Distraction. Plain and simple, keep their minds and bodies engaged to help distract them from the sounds. Offer to play with them with their favorite toy or game, petting, and offering their favorite treats - as long as they stay calm (giving treats when they're acting stressed can actually encourage that behavior by rewarding it). A KONG, stuffed with healthy treats, can keep them busily chewing instead of worrying (see some recipes [here](#)). Playing louder music or white noise can compete with the sound of the thunderstorm and help them ignore it.



4. Safe place. This can be a crate, the basement, or another room where they feel safe. Allow them to choose the space, and don't keep them confined, as that can increase their stress. Watch where they like to go and try to make it dark, cozy, and shielded from the light and the noise of the storm. A locked room can also prevent a panicking animal from bolting outside should the door unexpectedly opened.

5. Last resort, seek professional help. There are many different dog training methods out there, and some of them, like Tellington TTouch, may be of help to reduce tension and stress. A trip to the vet may be in order; although many prefer to stay drug free, some dogs may need to use medication to help ease the stress of thunderstorms. It can, with some other changes in environment, make all the difference and reduce everyone's stress.

Not one thing works for every dog, and usually a combination of things are needed. The inevitable storms that come with the warmer weather do not need to be a source of fear and anxiety for our four-legged family members.