

PAYNEHAM VET CENTRE

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Noise phobias - Fireworks / Thunderstorms / Trucks / Car Horns

Noise phobia are one of the most common phobias in dogs. Noise phobias are most commonly to fireworks 40% and thunderstorms 30%, and approximately 40% of dogs have 2 - 4 different phobias.

It is normal for dogs to react to sounds. This is normal survival behaviour telling of impending danger or threat and they exhibit this as fear - fight or flight.

But in dogs with noise phobias this normal behaviour has gone to extremes.

Signs include:

Whining, panting, salivating, pacing, trembling, cowering, seeking out the owner.

In extreme cases - running and escaping which can damage the dog and environment.

Treatment is time consuming and needs a high degree of commitment.

Especially if seasonal - thunderstorms and fireworks - as behavioural therapy may need to be intermittent to sustain the new controlled response.

Desensitisation

Recorded sounds on CD's. These are played repeatedly with a gradual increase in sound while the dog is relaxed and not showing any signs of phobia. Problems with this method are the realism of the sound and the location of speakers, as must appear to sound as if coming from outside, also best if played in multiple areas that the dog will hear phobia noises i.e., car, garden.

Counterconditioning

Associating the phobic sound with a different response which is good, relaxed and pleasant so will block the fear response. The aim is a relaxing environment or distracting with activities. Choose a room which the noise will be at a minimum, providing a space in which to feel secure is a good idea e.g., a crate or a kennel. Distraction with a ball or food or other object which the dog will not associate with anxiety or fear.

Body stroking and deep muscle massage can be beneficial in the early phases of response. A calm person exercising authority can be beneficial

Medications

- Dog appeasing pheromone such as Adaptil, may help raise the threshold for the phobic response.
- Anxiety medications, prescribed by a vet.

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