

## Animal Friends Presents

### How to Help Pets with Thunderstorm Phobias

Many pets fear thunderstorms, fireworks, and other noises. Pets may also be fearful of storm-associated events such as a change in barometric pressure, lightning, and even smells associated with the storms.

Always remember: The owner's attitude can influence the severity of the fear. For instance, if owners themselves are nervous during storms, phobias in their pets may occur more often or become more severe.

If the owner attempts to comfort the animal, the animal interprets it as confirming there really is something to be afraid of. Petting or comforting is really positive reinforcement of an undesirable behavior.

Common symptoms of storm phobia include:

- hiding
- accidents in the house
- pacing
- panting
- trembling
- trying to escape
- drooling
- not listening to commands



In many cases, the fear can be managed effectively. How you can help your pet:

- Refrain from giving rewards or punishment for fearful behavior. This is extremely important.
- Project a calm attitude
- Offer your pet a quiet, comfortable space or room to retreat to.
- Try doing something your pet likes (bringing out a favorite toy or food) ONLY when it storms
- Try desensitizing your pet by playing CDs of storm sounds during happy times. These are available at many stores that sell CDs or relaxation kits.
- Reduce the noise level during storms by creating “white noise” -- run a fan, air conditioner, TV or radio
- Increase the amount of play and exercise your pet gets every day, but especially if a storm is in the forecast, so your pet will be tired during the storm
- If all else fails, discuss the possibility of medication with your vet.

Visit <http://www.ThinkingOutsideTheCage.org> for a link to severe weather emergency guidelines.