

Boom & Bang!

This is a stressful time of year for numerous dogs and their families. Thunderstorms and fireworks can be terrifying events. Behaviors such as panting, salivation, pacing, housesoiling, digging/chewing, shaking/trembling, licking lips, yawning, hiding, or clinging to you can indicate distress. A fearful dog should never be punished for their behavior. Instead, there may be things you can do to make this a little more bearable for your noise sensitive dog.

If you have a puppy or dog that is new to you....

- Make an extra effort to stay home evenings, so you can monitor your dog's reactions and help overcome any panic.
- If you normally leave your dog outside in a fenced yard while away from home, find a confinement alternative during firecracker season. Being indoors can help muffle sounds and keep your pet away from people that may toss firecrackers into your yard.
- Try to distract with play sessions and treats to give positive associations with the booms, bangs, and pops if your dog shows signs of stress.
- As hard as it is...avoid coddling and comforting your dog. If you appear concerned, you reinforce your dog's conviction that something is horribly wrong. Stay upbeat and cheerful and encourage your dog to do fun stuff. The goal is to convince your dog that loud noises make good stuff happen.

If it's too late.....

- Stay home with your dog as much as possible during the fireworks and thunderstorm 'season'. Keep your dog away from windows and sliding glass doors; in extreme cases some dogs will go right through a window or door trying to escape the noises. A fearful dog can injure themselves and do a lot of damage to your home.
- Try turning up the TV or stereo to drown out or muffle the sounds.
- Some dogs may be less anxious in their crate and placed in a less noisy area in the home (like a basement). If your dog is not crate-trained and not accustomed to being confined, this is not the time to start. Spending pleasant time in these areas or feeding the dog can make them feel more comfortable there.
- Medication may help relieve some of the anxiety and stress. Know that medications alone do not help every dog. Please talk to your veterinarian if you think prescription drugs may help your dog.
- Make sure your dog has appropriate identification (collar, tags, microchip). In the event they do escape, it will be easier for them to be reunited with you.

If you would like to discuss your dog's noise phobias, please call our office and talk with one of our veterinarians. Behavior modification techniques such as counter conditioning and desensitization can often reduce the fear of noises. These techniques can take awhile to be successful and should not be done when it is thunderstorm or firework season. Please give us a call at 303-661-0602 if you have any question. Have a safe and happy Summer holiday season!