

## Fireworks Can Bring Fear!

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"PAWS-IBILITIES!"  
WITH DOGS!



Complete socialization includes preparing your puppies for the eventuality of things they will experience at some point in their lives with you, even if it's not happening as you raise them from 8 weeks of age.

Fireworks and thunderstorms, or even hunters & gunshots or noisy trucks will possibly come up in your dog's life span. These sudden, loud, sharp sounds can easily startle your puppy and produce a life long fear.



**NOTE: If you are a brand new dog or puppy owner,** you'll want to be extra cautious at those times when you can expect fireworks!

- ~ DO NOT take your puppy or dog to a firework display if you are not sure of his response.
- ~ Be prepared - know where and what time to expect your local fireworks. Don't be caught unaware.
- ~ Take your puppy away from the area on the day of the fireworks. Go for a long drive or a hike far away.
- ~ If you have another dog who is already worried about fireworks, it's a good idea to separate your new puppy/dog from him, so your new dog doesn't model his worry.

**Be aware of YOUR role in helping your puppy cope.** Offer confident support to your worried pup. But, be aware of your own emotions. You want to let him know he is safe, and there is 'No Big Deal' to those noises. Confident supportive words, but not 'pity' or 'babying' your puppy or dog at these times. Your expressed worry about him is translated by your puppy as validating his own worry. "See? Mom is worried, too, so I am right to be concerned about this noise!" You want to simply get him busy doing something else with you, so the noises have no relevance and become simply 'white noise' in the background. If your puppy or dog wants to be somewhere 'away', let them go, and just be with him for support where he chooses to be. While there with him, it's best to simply go about your business with confidence, play with your puppy as usual, or give him something fabulous to lick or chew. Normality lets your puppy know, as he looks to you to help interpret this noise, that it is no big deal! Nothing to worry about at all!

**Get ready for fireworks (same goes for thunderstorms, too) and execute these few strategies before the fireworks (or thunderstorms) ever happen.**

So when fireworks or thunderstorms do happen, your dogs knows all about the sound, the "games" & 'treats' the noise can bring.

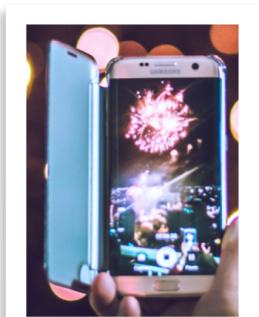
**IMPORTANT:** you want the NOISE to happen before your dog gets treats or you introduce any 'coping strategies'. The sound has to predict the relaxation. Don't give your dog accidental 'hints' that the thunder or fireworks are about to happen. Be careful that you do not set things up where the 'thing' you are using to create a more relaxed response happens FIRST, since then you may actually be conditioning the relaxing 'thing' to be a predictor of the fearful thing, the fireworks or thunder noise.

- 1.) play fireworks (or thunderstorm or gunshots) sounds on your phone or computer:
  - a.) at a low volume, at a distance away from your dog. Go about your business as usual - your dog will be looking to you for what to do when he hears this noise.
  - b.) Overtime, change the variables of the sound: change only the volume OR distance OR the time. Don't increase volume and decrease distance or play the sound longer, all at the same time - change only variable at a time.

For example: increase the volume from the same distance. Then, perhaps increase the length of time the sound plays from that same distance.

Then, go back to a lower volume, but bring the computer closer. Overtime, increase the volume from this new same distance.

NOTE: Observe your dog with EACH change of variable - distance, volume or time - to be sure he is under threshold and showing NO signs of stress.



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2.) stimulate your dog during fireworks sounds with fun games: teach your dog lots of interactive games that you can play: tug, hand targets, tricks, 'search' games for hidden treats. Getting him into his 'working' brain gets him OUT of his 'emotional' brain! Mix it up and keep him busy while the noises happen, and eventually end.

3.) Stuff Topples or Kongs or have meaty bones available or interactive puzzle games or a snuffle matt, that your dog gets ONLY when the noise is present. This creates a positive association with the noise. It's a great idea to have 2-3 stuffed Kongs/Topples, frozen in your freezer for times like these, with extra special treats he gets at no other time!

**Create a new "Positive Conditioned Emotional Response" to THINGS and ACTIVITIES that teach your dog to be calm & settled in the presence of these 'things and activities'. Ask us how.**

**IMPORTANT:** Teach these 'associations' when there is no noise, and then, you can put them to use during fireworks (or thunderstorms or other situations that your dog finds worrying)

**For helping dogs to 'settle' or be 'soothed', you can attach a relaxed emotional response to things like:**

1.) Consider a 'Tellington TTouch' body wrap (made easily with an Ace Bandage)



2.) wearing a 'Thundershirt' - condition your dog to relax when it is worn.

3.) Play classical music, turn on a fan, create 'white-noise' while your dog relaxes. (music should have specific tones/beats to help dogs relax: look for music by Lisa Spector, pianist and Pet Calming Maestro)



4.) Condition as 'safe space' where perhaps the noises are less loud, or are more easily disguised. Perhaps a crate in the lower level of the home, or a small room, without windows, etc.

Work with your dog at times when there are no noises or concerns, then when these things "come out or go on", your dog has learned to associate them with relaxation. So, bringing these things out during fireworks or thunderstorms can bring forward his 'conditioned emotional response' of relaxation.

**For dogs who are super freaked out by fireworks,** it can take a little more work in addition to counter-conditioning to create a positive "conditioned emotional response". You may need the help of your vet & pharmaceuticals to help your dog cope while you work to change his emotions about these scary things. Speak with your vet.



- 1.) Melatonin (supplements naturally occurring neurohormone)
- 2.) DAP pheromones that can induce calm (modelled after pheromones released by female dogs when puppies are nursing)
- 3.) RX Medication, as a back up, when determined with your vet to be needed.



Most importantly, recognize the incredible negative impact fireworks can have on not just our dogs, but much of the wildlife who are exposed to them.

**Petition your local communities to STOP** noisy, scary fireworks, not just for dogs, but for all wildlife and even for some people. Ask them to try "silent fireworks" (less flash powder/less or muffled noise) or even "drone" displays.

