

As I know many of you have had a hound (or other breed) before that has shown some sort of stress during thunderstorms, fireworks and other loud noises. I can speak personally too, because I used to have a German Shorthaired Pointer (keep in mind this is a hunting dog!) that was absolutely terrified of thunder and fireworks and guns. She was completely destructive when penned and I tried a million remedies and strategies and finally got it to the point where she wasn't trying to jump through the glass door. Her way to deal— I would have to let her out in our 3 acres (fenced) to find a bush to hide under. It worried me to death sending her out, but she would find a way out if I didn't provide it. Amazingly, if she would suddenly walk off and hide, we knew a storm was on its way, and if she was allowed to do this, her stress was almost gone. This of course, cannot be an option with greys!

I have compiled a search for all things recommended and a few other hints I've come across in hopes that one of them, or a combination, will make your hound a little less stressed! It can be so confusing for us because we understand what's going on, and we expect our hounds to too.

So... here's our question from Sarah on behalf of Hollie:

"Hello! We adopted our Hollie almost 4 years ago now from Nittany. As she is getting older, she has become more fearful of loud noises, i.e., thunderstorms, fireworks, etc. Is there anything we can do to help her? She shakes and paces and whines and you just feel so bad for her."

Thunderstorms and fireworks both can be scary things to animals because they do not always understand where not only the noise, but also the vibrations are coming from. Some animals can sense a storm approaching via the vibrations through the ground before you can hear any rumbles. One bad experience with a loud noise can set up your pet for the same reaction with future noises and can reaffirm her reactions to it every time it happens unless you can reassure her that big booms do not mean that it's time to stress out. One issue that might be happening with older dogs suddenly becoming afraid might be from gradual loss of his/her eyesight and/or hearing. Things become fuzzier to see and sounds can't be heard as well until they are suddenly there and really loud. Your next trip to the vet can rule this out.

Before I list all the things I've found to try, the most important thing is, as mentioned also by Toni, is not to try to coddle and give attention to the behaviors being demonstrated. Your stressed but gentle "reassuring" voice that's being spoken to the dog is heard from you as "It's OK baby, don't fuss, I'm right here", can translate to the dog so that he/she interprets instead "It's a loud noise! I'm scared, you're scared, let's be scared!" Using a more neutral and louder voice (like if giving a command) will come across better by taking out the anxiety in your voice. Your canine is looking to you for support, so if you stay neutral and relaxed, he/she should notice it. For dogs already affected by noises, this may take awhile to get through. Ignoring the responses to the noise will show him/her that if he/she fusses and whines, you won't give attention, which is exactly what is being craved. For me, I found it easy to just talk out loud during the thunder while I sit near my hound. I will read whatever I have near me— the other day I was reading the front page of the newspaper just to make neutral noise. I'm sure he didn't care about the school board's issues, but it seemed to help. Maybe my voice was drowning out the noise of the thunder. Another important point— verbally reward anything that he/she does that is good with "good dog" (or whatever phrase) in a happy tone whenever your hound sits down, stops pacing, stops whining, etc. This has been helping me at night whenever storms come through, because when he jumps up at the first few

sounds of thunder, he gets a firm command of “NO, go lay down” and he’s begun to listen.

Playing music or the TV before and during noises may help to drown out some of bad sounds. Just be sure that you play music (assuming the TV is on more often) not just when there is a storm. Your dog might begin to associate that turning on the radio will be followed by the thing he/she doesn’t like. Turning the radio on for even a minute or 2 several times a day with no noise event afterwards will hopefully lead to desensitizing them to it if that association becomes a problem.

Crating a fearful dog may make it worse, especially if the dog isn’t used to being in a crate. Unsupervised crating of a very stressed dog during noises may not be a good idea because the urge to escape could cause injury. If this is the case, pick a room in the house where it is the quietest and darkest (I use our finished basement as the room to stay in because my hound hates the crate. ‘His’ couch is down there, and it’s where we spend most of our time. His other favorite spot is in our bedroom because that’s his ‘den’). The complete opposite of that is if your dog likes his/her crate because it might consider it its ‘safe and quiet’ place. If so, allow your dog to go lay in the crate while you stay nearby. Keeping the door open is up to your dog’s response to it; dogs that aren’t 100% comfortable in the crate may like the door open. Some people suggest laying a blanket over all sides except the front so he/she can see out, and the covering will make it feel more enclosed like a den. Sitting near the crate is a good idea so that you can observe, use neutral voice, and give treats. Feeding really yummy treats or bits of meat can divert his/her attention from the noise to you instead. Be very careful with treat rewards—be sure to only give them immediately at the time of good behavior. Inadvertently giving treats when he/she is whining instead of during periods of quiet can reinforce the whining. It might be easier to first focus on the strongest or most dangerous (i.e. potential injury to self) response that the dog exhibits because it will be what drives the dog the most. As the dog begins to settle, start rewarding all other small good behaviors.

Putting a shirt or some sort of garment on the dog alone or in combination with crating can have positive results. Some of the theories are that by putting on a t-shirt (or something tighter), it will give a feeling of protection and calmness. One good product I’ve heard of can be found at: [www.anxietywrap.com](http://www.anxietywrap.com). This product actually received a patent as a result of the many positive reviews published by users. Its primary use is for thunder anxiety, and if you follow massage therapy and things, it is designed to put constant pressure on certain points on the body that will promote the body to release ‘good feelings’. Some people also have used dryer sheets either inside the crate or rubbed over the body of the dog.

I have used a homeopathic remedy for my hound for separation anxiety called Homeopet for Anxiety. My aunt recommended using it after she found good results with her Chesapeake Bay Retrievers who showed severe anxiety to other people, noises, and even to each other (she is a foster for abused Bays). If you are in the State College area, Wiscoy’s carries the whole line. It can be given every 6 hours up to 3 times a day and is fast acting, so you do not need to give hours beforehand (which can be really hard when dealing with storms). Other treatments to consider (some also mentioned by Toni):

- Rescue Remedy. This formula is also especially for dogs. You give it just prior to the storm, and for every 15-30 minutes during the storm.

- Mimulus, a flower essence, which can be given prior to a storm. It can be put in water or rubbed on their coat or given internally, whichever is most comfortable for your dog.
- A human supplement called L-theanine can also be used. Check with your vet for dosage requirements.
- DAP pheromone. Plugs into your wall outlet like Glade plugin and diffuses a calming pheromone into the air that your dog can smell (origin of the pheromone is from a nursing mom).

For severe cases, especially if you have a very destructive dog, you might have to get a prescription for a relaxer for your hound (like Valium). Results can be varied, and some animals don't seem to get relief from the stronger drugs. It is usually used in moderation, so long-term use may be something your vet won't agree on. Also, most depend on a very narrow window on when to administer, so if your hound is already stressing, it may be too late. Most of these relaxers will take several weeks of use before changes can be seen. For this reason, I consider drugs a last resort. I've read some vets may recommend using Benadryl--this reminds me of when I hear parents say they give their kids Benadryl or Nyquil to fall asleep.

Visit the following link for good tips on how to desensitize your dog to the sound of thunder: <http://www.bestfriends.org/theanimals/pdfs/dogs/fearofthunder.pdf>.

This link is from a study done by Penn State:

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2005/12/051217005852.htm>

<http://www.drsfostersmith.com> sell DAP pheromone setups (so do most of the online dog catalogs).

As with all anxieties, constant and consistent actions and tons of patience will be needed from you and may take some time pay off. It may be a many-months process before you gain positive results, or, some of the reactions may never fully go away. The goal is to try to find ways to make your hound feel more secure and relaxed during noises so that you can live together sanely.