



Nanango Veterinary Surgery

ABN 84 010 681 580

Dr Jon Fearnley BVSc MVS
Dr Sam Morrow BVSc (Hons)
Dr Julia Dowsett BVSc (Hons) B Agri Sc (Hons)
Dr Michelle Rees BVSc

104 Drayton Street
Nanango QLD 4615

Ph: 4163 1611

Fax: 4163 1652

Email: info@nanangovets.com.au
www.nanangovets.com.au

Countering Storm Phobias in Dogs

If your dog is fearful of thunder, he or she is exhibiting one of the most common phobias that affect dogs. So try the following:

1. **Predict the problem.** Use weather forecasts or websites for advance warning as most storms are over-predicted.



2. **Try to be home with your dog.** Having someone with the pet will reduce the fear.
3. **Remove your dog from the garden.** This removes the chance of escape, and harm in the process. The dog is best placed in a sound proof area or "den".
4. **Place your dog in a sound proof den.** This is to remove the dog as much as possible from the noise, sight, smell, and feel of the storm. This room then becomes a den, like a wolf's den that is a safe retreat for the dog. Extra efforts to sound-proof the room with heavy curtains, or foam mattresses (cut to fit the windows) can be rewarding.
5. **Use masking noise.** This dulls out the storm noise. A radio is good or a special CD can be used as a therapy or distraction.
6. **Use medication where needed.** We can prescribe medication to assist your efforts, but these need to be given well before the storm starts. A trial dose can help tell us how much drug your dog needs, how long it takes to work, and how long the effect lasts. There are a couple of drugs we use, but we no longer recommend sedatives as they don't reduce the anxiety from the noise. We like a new drug alprazolam, and also use diazepam (Valium) to reduce anxiety.



7. **Use Pheromones.** Dog Appeasing Pheromones are up to 70% effective in calming noise affected dogs. These come as sprays or diffusers, and are very effective in a noise proof den.

8. **Practice calming strategies.** Give the dog comfort and attention when it's panicking. Try massage of the muscles of the cheek, forehead, neck and shoulder areas. Wrap the dog's body tightly in a towel, and hug the pet around it's chest. Make the dog look at you and calm it by slowly blinking, smiling, and whispering to it.



9. **Teach your dog to tolerate thunder noise.** This can be done with CDs of thunder noises and a process of getting the dog used to the noise.

For more details contact the surgery or check out a great website hosted by Dr. Cam Day, a specialist Dog Behaviourist in Brisbane, at www.pethealth.com.au .

Specialist appointments for assessment can also be arranged.



Dog's name:

Owner's name:

Weight: kg

Recommendations:

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Me, I'm not scared of storms, but I use them as an excuse to sleep in my Master's house...