



By planning ahead, you can prevent a fireworks- or thunderstorm-induced meltdown.

Calm Before the Storm

Fireworks and thunderstorms can make the summer season a particularly stressful time for dogs and their families. But by starting to train away your dog's fear early, you can help ensure that your dog is safe and happy in the months to come.

DESENSITIZE

Fireworks can be very traumatic to some dogs, but the good news is that this particular fear responds well to sound desensitization, if you plan ahead.

Search for video or audio of fireworks or thunder online and play it at a super low volume in the morning, gradually increasing the volume during the day. Initially, start the process on a day that you're home so that you can oversee your dog's response to the sound and make adjustments in the volume, if necessary. Ideally, by the time the real



fireworks happen, your dog will just think it's a natural part of his day.

STAY HOME

If your dog is afraid of fireworks or thunder, try to stay home when you know there's going to be a celebration or storm. (Isn't it more fun to celebrate at home with friends,



anyway?) Here are a few ideas to keep your dog calm when you're hanging out together:

- Play calming music.
- Have a container of high-value treats or toys within reach. Whenever a firework goes off or thunder starts to rumble, calmly inhale and then exhale, then reach for a treat and toss it to your dog. Feel free to offer a handful of treats. Do this every time there's a fireworks sound, and, if it lasts a long time, just keep calmly tossing out treats.
- Give your dog a food puzzle to enjoy. If you have a Kong, you can fill it with peanut butter, pet-safe baby food, or canned pumpkin and freeze it. Or, if you don't have time to prepare a frozen Kong, make one with melted cheese. Melt cheese in a glass container and then carefully pour it into the Kong. You can also put a one-inch cube (or a slice) of cheese into the Kong, microwave for 20 seconds (times may vary depending on your microwave), and swirl it around until the inside is coated with cheese. Allow it to cool before giving it to him.
- Double check that your dog's tags and microchip are up-to-date with your current contact information, just in case he does escape.

PREPARE BEFORE LEAVING

If you really must go out, follow these steps to protect your pet:

- Hire a pet sitter or friend to stay with your dog, or bring your dog to a quieter house (well before the fireworks start).
- Make sure he's wearing tags and has a microchip with your current contact information.
- Go for a long walk to exercise your dog before you leave and before the festivities begin. That helps increase the possibility of him falling

asleep while you're gone.

- Leave music, white noise, and/or a television on.
- Leave him with a stuffed Kong (as described earlier) or other interactive toy.

CONSIDER MEDICATION OR SUPPLEMENTS

If your dog's anxiety is severe, talk to a veterinarian about whether medication is necessary. There are also some accessories and supplements that are effective for some dogs. It may take some trial and error, as well as input from your veterinarian—to determine the best solution for your pet. Visit shop.akc.org to find these products.

- Dog-appeasing pheromones may naturally help calm nervous dogs and are available in collars, diffusers, and sprays.
- K9FitVest
- Anxiety Wrap
- Thundershirt
- Dog-safe essential oils, like lavender
- Herbal anti-stress supplement for dogs



While any sound sensitivity with a dog is a challenge, with some pre-planning and desensitization work, you should notice that your dog is able to tolerate the sounds better than he did last year. **FD**

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