



# What's that racket?!

## Getting to the bottom of noise aversion in dogs

When your dog's fear of thunder or fireworks or another environmental sound sends him running for cover, check in with your veterinarian for help.

**F**ear is a normal, adaptive response to stressful situations. Fear helps keep an animal safe by encouraging it to hide or escape from a dangerous situation. Anxiety is the worry or anticipation of something frightening occurring. Noise aversion includes both fear and anxiety about loud noises as well as phobias and discomfort about noises. In our pets, it is normal to startle at loud or sudden noises, but in the case of noise aversion, the fear becomes a pathologic process that interrupts normal daily life. In cases of noise aversion, the animal thinks he is in danger in the face of a noise that is not really dangerous. Put yourself in your dog's shaky paws for a second: Can you imagine thinking you were facing death on a regular basis?

### How will I know if my dog is noise averse?

Signs of anxiety or noise aversion can include vocalizing such as howling or barking, urinating inappropriately around the house, hiding, salivating and being overactive when a loud noise is occurring or they anticipate it might occur soon. Sometimes dogs will damage items around the house, injure themselves or even escape. This heart-breaking level of stress and anxiety must be addressed for your dog's sake and for yours.

### Why should I worry, it's just a bit of shaking?

Is it vital to understand that noise aversion is a medical

diagnosis. Chemical changes in the brain contribute to severe fears, anxiety and phobias, including the outward signs of stress. It is important to ask your veterinarian if you think your pet is suffering from any kind of anxiety or stress. Chronic stress is not only a horrible experience for pets in the moment, but it can cause lasting changes to the brains and bodies of affected animals. If a pet is damaging an owner's belongings or keeping them up at night, the human-animal bond is also at risk.

### What will my veterinarian do?

Your veterinarian will want to talk with you and examine your pet. There will probably need to be some diagnostic testing to rule out other disease processes and make sure your pet is healthy enough for a treatment plan. The treatment plan may include environmental changes, behavior modification protocols and even medication. No one treatment plan works for every affected patient, and perseverance will be required to find what works best for your pet's case. Your veterinarian will help you decide where to start.

There are medications that can address the chemical imbalance in the brain enough to allow your pet time to learn that there is nothing to fear. It might be that the first treatment you try is not effective, but don't lose hope! Many pets with noise aversion live normal and productive lives. Including your veterinarian in the diagnostic and treatment plans gives you the best chance for success and builds a healthcare team in which all the members work together to find what will help your frightened pet.