

Noise anxiety in dogs



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PHARMA



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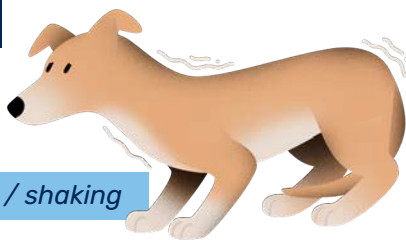
What is noise anxiety in dogs?

Fearful and/or anxious behaviour associated with noise is commonly known as noise anxiety.

NOISE ANXIETY CAN AFFECT DOGS OF ANY BREED, SHAPE, SIZE, OR AGE.

Up to 50% of all dogs will be affected by this condition during their life time.¹ Dogs express noise anxiety in many different ways. Milder signs, such as lip licking or yawning, can be hard to recognize as noise anxiety symptoms. Even in cases with milder symptoms, the dog still feels distressed and uncomfortable. In cases of severe noise anxiety, the dog may panic and injure itself, escape, and/or damage property.^{1,2} Noise anxiety may negatively affect the quality of life of your dog.²

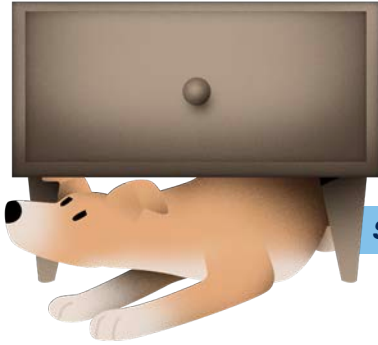
Up to 50% of dogs suffer from noise anxiety¹



Sign of anxiety: Trembling / shaking

¹) Blackwell et al 2013. Fear responses to noises in domestic dogs: Prevalence, risk factors and co-occurrence with other fear related behaviour. Applied Animal Behaviour Science 145 (2013) 15–25.

²) Grigg et al 2021. Stress-Related Behaviors in Companion Dogs Exposed to Common Household Noises, and Owners' Interpretations of Their Dogs' Behaviors. Front. Vet. Sci. 8:760845. doi: 10.3389/fvets.2021.760845



Sign of anxiety: Hiding

NOISE ANXIETY RARELY GOES AWAY ON ITS OWN.

FEAR OF SUDDEN, LOUD NOISES IS A NATURAL REACTION. Dogs are not able to understand that loud situations in everyday life are not dangerous.

Dogs of any size, shape, or breed can react fearfully to loud noises such as fireworks, thunderstorms, or engine sounds. Noise anxiety is not always related to the loudness of a sound. Even a quiet sound can cause anxiety.

Noise anxiety is a serious condition that causes distress and anxiety for the dog. It can get worse over time if it's not treated properly. Fortunately there are many ways to help your dog.

Sign of anxiety: Panting



Common signs

RECOGNISE TYPICAL FEAR BEHAVIOUR

There are numerous different signs of noise anxiety in dogs. The signs can vary from one dog to another, and their intensity depends on how fearful and/or anxious the dog is. A severe case of noise anxiety is easier to detect than a milder one.

THE SIGNS ARE NOT ALWAYS THE SAME.

What might come as a surprise is that the signs are not always obvious. With every negative experience noise anxiety can gradually get worse if it's not treated properly.

Typical signs of noise anxiety include:

- Panting
- Trembling
- Shaking
- Hiding
- Restlessness
- Barking
- Whining



Sign of anxiety: Yawning

The dog's ears are usually drawn back, and the dog might be more clingy than usual.^{1,2,3,4} These signs of noise anxiety are rather easy to detect.

SOME OF THE SIGNS ARE MORE SUBTLE

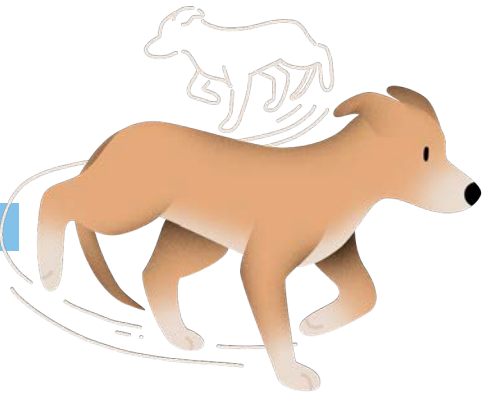
Signs such as lip licking, swallowing, and yawning may also indicate anxiety. Furrowed brows or wide eyes can also be signs of noise anxiety. Your dog might show only one of these signs, or a combination of them.^{1,2}



Sign of anxiety: Lip licking



Sign of anxiety:
Owner seeking behaviour



Sign of anxiety: *Restless pacing*



Sign of anxiety:
"Whale eyes", wide eyes with white parts visible



Sign of anxiety:
Flattened ears and /or furrowed brows

Triggers and causes

WHAT MAKES YOUR DOG AFRAID OF NOISES?

Loud noises can scare dogs, but the initial triggering factor is not always that obvious.^{1,2} There are often several factors involved. In all cases it's important that you behave normally during situations that trigger noise anxiety.

HOW NOISE ANXIETY CAN START

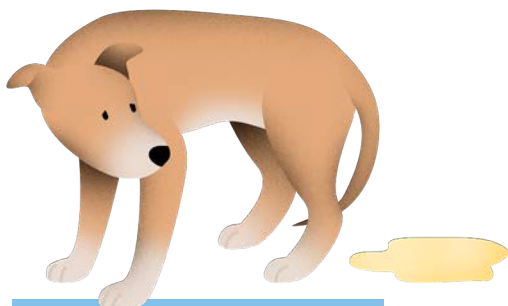
Noise anxiety can start when the dog experiences a traumatic incident, such as a loud, heavy thunderstorm. In most cases the triggering factor is not obvious. Some dogs develop noise anxiety gradually, for others it is evident from an early age. There might be a genetic aspect to the condition. Studies have shown that some breeds, such as herding dogs, are more likely to be frightened by noises.³

In all cases it's important that you stay calm around the fearful dog, and behave normally during the situations that trigger noise anxiety. Most dogs are sensitive to their owner's behaviour.

COMMON TRIGGERS

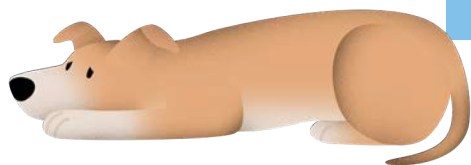
Common triggers for noise anxiety in dogs can include:

- Traffic noise
- Vacuum cleaner
- Construction work
- Thunder
- Fireworks
- Gunshots
- Alarms/security systems
- Kitchen equipment
- Lawn equipment
- Party noises / celebrations
- Sporting events / festivals



Sign of anxiety:
Elimination in the home

⁴⁾ Overall Karen L. 2013. Manual of Clinical Behavioral Medicine



Sign of anxiety:
Refusing to eat treats

Management options

USING A COMBINATION OF TREATMENT OPTIONS, NOISE ANXIETY

CAN BE TREATED. Noise anxiety can negatively affect the welfare of your dog, especially if it occurs frequently. Options include environmental management and behaviour modification, as well as medicinal options.

Speak to your vet for further advice.

Noise anxiety often requires life-long management. The aim is to reduce the dog's distress and fear, and eventually teach the dog to cope with noisy situations. When left untreated, noise anxiety is likely to progress and can also make the dog prone to developing other anxieties.^{4,5}

Environmental management

SOME ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES ARE EASIER TO IMPLEMENT THAN OTHERS, such as closing the curtains during thunderstorms or fireworks and using background music to muffle the sounds.

Other management tips include:

- Avoid exposure to anxiety triggers
- Keep pets inside during a thunderstorm or fireworks
- Create a safe, calm place for your dog at home.

⁵) Overall et al 2001.

Frequency of nonspecific clinical signs in dogs with separation anxiety, thunderstorm phobia, and noise phobia, J. Am. Vet. Med. Assoc. 219, 467–473.



Sign of anxiety:
Vocalising

These changes won't cure your dog, but they will help to reduce their stress.

Find out what space works best for your dog and encourage them to use this safe spot. Training should occur only when your dog is relaxed. Associate the safe spot with positive feelings by letting your dog find favourite toys and treats there.

Distracting your dog with a favourite toy or playtime can help re-direct their attention away from scary sounds. This positive distraction will only work if your dog is not already anxious. Remember to stay calm, to also help your dog be more relaxed.

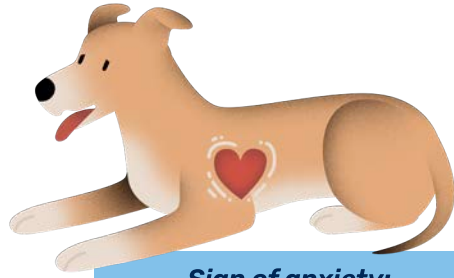
Behaviour modification

BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION IS NOT A QUICK SOLUTION. It requires long-term investment of time and effort but when correctly implemented, behaviour modification techniques can help relieve the dog's anxiety. To ensure success, it is recommended to consult a vet specialising in behavioural medicine.

Rewarding the dog for relaxed behaviour in general has been shown to be effective.⁴ Teach the dog to relax on cue using a so called sit / stay / look (SSL) relaxation exercise combined with a lot of treats, and a soft mat to create a quiet, calm, safe place for your dog.

Remember to stay calm and never punish the dog for showing anxious behaviour. Watch your dog and learn what kind of behaviour calms them.

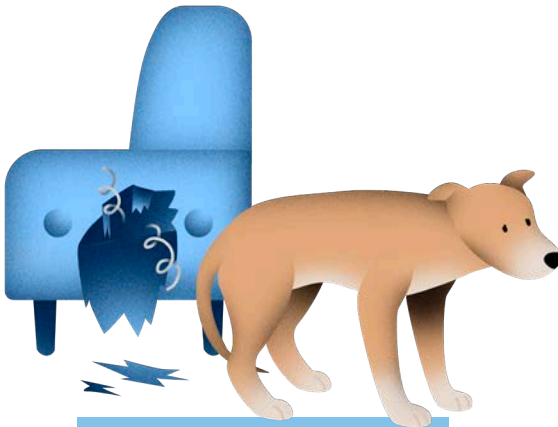
Techniques of behaviour modification include desensitisation and counterconditioning.⁴



Sign of anxiety:
Elevated heart rate

DESENSITISATION

Desensitisation is used to reduce a fearful reaction to a scary sound. This technique involves gradually exposing the dog to sounds they are afraid of by using recording sounds. Start at a low level, low enough for the dog to remain calm. Increase the intensity of the sound very slowly each day. Keep increasing the intensity as long as the dog continues to remain calm. If your dog shows signs of noise anxiety during training, you might be increasing the sound intensity too quickly. This technique is likely to take several weeks, or even longer.



Sign of anxiety:
Destructive behaviour

COUNTERCONDITIONING

The goal of counterconditioning is to create a new, positive emotion to the desensitised sound. The dog is rewarded with a treat when they don't react fearfully to a sound they were originally afraid of. For example; if the dog is exposed to a scary sound at a very low intensity level, reward your dog immediately for staying calm. When repeated often enough, the dog will develop a positive association with noise.

Counterconditioning usually takes weeks or sometimes months before the dogs shows positive results. The dog should be trained in different settings, and only when the dog is relaxed.

Calming Products

There are different options available to help alleviate the signs of anxiety, and reduce stress for your dog.

Ask your vet for help when managing noise anxiety.

Noise anxiety can compromise your dog's well-being.

Discuss the most appropriate options for your dog with your vet.



When life gets too noisy for our best friends...

Noise anxiety can cause real distress for your dog and should be taken seriously. In this guide you will find useful information about the condition and how you can help.

Ask for help from your vet if you think your dog suffers from noise anxiety.