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*Strengthening the Human –  
Animal Connection*

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## Thunderstorm Phobia

- ❖ Both underlying anxiety and learned response to storms may influence the development of storm-related fears.
- ❖ A phobia is an exaggerated fear that is out of proportion to the level of danger and is generally maladaptive.
- ❖ Storm phobia can interfere with the dog's quality of life and the dog-owner interaction.
- ❖ An individual dog's reaction to thunderstorms may be categorized as normal, fearful, anxious, or phobic.
- ❖ Dogs that are afraid of thunderstorms normally respond by attempting to escape, hide, or seek comfort during a storm.

### Treatment

Consists of a combination of Environmental management, Behavior Modification, and anxiolytic medications and/or pheromone/flower essence therapy.

- ❖ Encourage the use of a “safe” area in the home where visual and auditory stimuli can be reduced (closet, bathroom, basement).
- ❖ Mask thunderstorm sounds with competing noises, such as fans, music, T.V., or white noise.
- ❖ Apply a sound-muting head wrap.
- ❖ Dog Appeasing Pheromone (D.A.P.) – A synthetic pheromone that can reduce anxiety (available as a spray, collar or diffuser)
- ❖ Harmonese: A trademarked flower essence therapy with anxiolytic properties (It has performed well in clinical trials).
- ❖ Anxiolytic medications are often prescribed by a veterinarian to facilitate behavior modification.
- ❖ Behavior modification is the most effective means of helping a dog overcome storm phobias. A plan is customized to each dog and takes into consideration the level of their fear. Desensitization and counter-conditioning are often at the center of the treatment but other approaches can aid training.

