

Dogs Stress Reaction to Storms Reduced in Multi-Dog Households

Stress hormone spikes 207 percent during storms for thunder-phobic dogs.

Thunderstorm anxiety in dogs is a very common problem, with reports of 15 to 30 percent of pet dogs affected, says Nancy Dreschel, a veterinarian who conducted a study on thunder phobia in dogs.

The study found that during storms production of the stress hormone cortisol spiked 207 percent in dogs with thunder anxiety. Having a sympathetic owner did not lower a dogs stress level, but living in a multi-dog household did.

There were no effects of the owners behavior or the quality of the dog-owner relationship on the stress hormone response that we measured in the canine, says Dr. Dreschel. However, the presence of other dogs in the household was linked to less pronounced stress reactivity and more rapid recovery of the thunderstorm-phobic animal.

The study, published in the December 2005 issue of the journal Applied Animal Behavior Science, also found that dogs in multi-dog households started out with higher levels of cortisol, which may indicate that dogs living with other dogs are under more stress.

For more information, visit the Applied Animal Behavior Science website.

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