

Laughter Is the Best Medicine Even For Dogs

Recording of "laughing" dogs helps to calm canines in shelters.

In 2001, animal behaviorist Patricia Simonet, from Spokane, Wash., began recording the panting sounds dogs make when they greet people.

Simonet says dogs make a distinctive breathy exhalation when they are experiencing good times. She calls the sound dog laughing.

In September, she began playing a long recording of the laughing sounds at Spokane County Animal Protection. She says the recording has had a soothing effect on the behavior of the dogs in the shelter. It has generally eliminated their barking, circling, lunging and pacing behavior.

Nancy Hill, shelter director, says that when Simonet played regular dog pant sounds over a loudspeaker, the shelters dogs continued to bark. But when she played the dog laughing sounds, all 15 barking dogs became quiet within a minute.

Now the shelter plays the tape every day to keep the animals mellow. It is sort of like a light switch, says Simonet. You know when its not on.

The laughing sound is similar to normal dog panting , but has a broader range of frequencies, Simonet says. She has set up a website with a snippet of the sound.

Simonet isn't sure about potential commercial applications, but she says shelters and kennels have been calling her for copies of the tape. She plans to make a 45-minute CD of the laughing and sell it as a shelter fundraiser.

For more information, visit the [Laughing Dog website](#).

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