

YOU AND YOUR PET

Ceraunophobia— does your dog have it?

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Special to The IFP

What is ceraunophobia? It's the fear of thunder and it is estimated that 19% of all dogs suffer from it, and as a dog gets older, the fear gets worse. As a dog owner, you would probably like to know



Book bargain

Chantal Harwood, 6, of Georgetown is immersed in a book she found at last weekend's UCHS book sale. Proceeds aid the cats and dogs at the Humane Society shelter. Wuff! and meow! That's 'thanks!' from the dogs and cats.

Photo by Yves Desjardins

what causes the fear and what you can do to help ease it. Let's take a look at those questions.

What is it about a thunderstorm that can trigger anxiety in dogs that ranges from panting and pacing to death in extreme cases? The stimuli associated with storms include thunder, lightning and changes in the barometric pressure. At one time, your dog may have experienced some sort of fear during a storm or the fear may be innate and your dog is just programmed to fear storms. If possible, try to determine what part of the storm causes the fear. This will give you a handle on how to help your dog get through the storm.

If your dog suffers from a fear of thunderstorms, deal with the problem before the storm starts, not during it. Trying to soothe or cuddle your dog during a storm will only reinforce the behavior that being scared is ok. If your dog finds a safe place in the house to be during a storm where they can remain calm, that is an acceptable solution. If there is no safe place to go, other measures need to be tried.

To help your dog overcome their fear, you have some different options: association, desensitization or medication. If your dog suffers from a mild case of fear and loves to play with a ball, start playing with the ball before the storm starts. The dog will associate the beginning of the storm with something fun they like to do. Once the storm starts, continue playing ball but stop if your dog becomes fright-



ened. Let them settle down by you or find a quiet place in the house where the sound of thunder isn't as loud. Calm your dog with long, slow strokes, or try a distraction technique of walking your dog around the house and redirecting their focus on other tasks.

When using the desensitization method, play a recording of a thunderstorm, all the while increasing the volume. The training sessions should last between 40 and 50 minutes twice a week and take place in different parts of the house. Have your dog sit and stay while playing the recording at a low level. Reward them as soon as they relax. Increase the level and reward your dog as they relax. Stop the training if your dog becomes tense. Be aware that there are drawbacks to this technique. It may not work if your dog becomes familiar with the recorded noise and does not respond to it, or if it is the barometric pressure, which you can't duplicate, that your dog is scared of.

If you have to use medication, consult your vet for the proper treatment. Anti-anxiety drugs and antidepressants are available. Keep in mind that some drugs may have side effects if given over a long period of time. There are also some herbs on the market that can help calm anxious dogs, but once again, talk to your vet before giving them to your dog.

While it is not known why some dogs suddenly develop a fear of thunderstorms, there is a lot that you can do to help alleviate your dog's fear of storms before it gets out of control. Start working on it today.



Rabies clinic in June

The Upper Credit Humane Society held a successful rabies clinic recently at Elmira Farm Service (John Deere Dealership) at Ospringe, north of Acton and plan to repeat the clinic on Saturday, June 16 at the UCHS Shelter, corner of Hwy. 124 and Trafalgar Rd. N. The clinic will run 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. No appointments will be booked — first come, first serve, so come early. Dogs must be leashed at all times and cats must be in a carrier. For information call 519-833-2287. At the April clinic volunteers efficiently vaccinated 325 pets, and microchipped another 54. "They were so organized," said EFS sales representative Kelly Counsell. "They hosted a sold-out barbecue and car wash with all the proceeds going to improve the lives of the strays and unwanted pets they work so hard to place."

Photo submitted

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