

# Sound Sensitivities

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## In the Literature

Hargrave C. When does a pet's sound sensitivity become a welfare problem? *Companion Anim.* 2016;21(10):548-553.

## FROM THE PAGE ...

Studies have suggested that nearly 49% of dogs are reported by their owners to have some level of sound sensitivity.<sup>1-3</sup> Thirteen percent of noise-fearful dogs respond to sounds barely audible to humans and exhibit enough fearful behavior to be considered phobic.<sup>1</sup> Because most owners may not recognize early signs of these problems, actual sound sensitivity incidence is likely to be significantly higher. Taking no action to diagnose or manage is not ideal, as the rate of spontaneous recovery is only 4%.<sup>1</sup> The intensity of the problem increases gradually with repeated exposures, and more occurrences can trigger fearful responses. Some owners (<30%) will ask for veterinary advice only after their trial-and-error techniques prove unhelpful and the problem has become severe.<sup>1-3</sup>

Good welfare practice suggests prevention of sound sensitivity or early intervention is best. It is important to ask a few basic questions every time the patient is presented to the clinic, such as "Does your dog show any trembling, panting, pacing, whining, hiding, or increased clinging during thunderstorms or when fireworks go off?"<sup>2-4</sup>

Veterinary practices can recommend owners identify "safe spots" their pets can use and encourage their use even for pets not yet showing problems.<sup>5</sup> For dogs, these spots are typically interior closets where there are strong owner odors from shoes or dirty clothes.<sup>3,6</sup> Cats seek small, dark hiding places instead of those that are scent enriched.

## A simple online tool can be useful to convince owners there may be a problem.<sup>7</sup>

To assess the presence and degree of sound sensitivity, a simple online tool ([adaptil.com/uk/what-causes-stress-in-dogs/behaviourist-fear-of-fireworks-assessment](http://adaptil.com/uk/what-causes-stress-in-dogs/behaviourist-fear-of-fireworks-assessment)) can be useful to convince owners there may be a problem.<sup>7</sup> When sound sensitivity is identified, established behavior-modification techniques include desensitization and counterconditioning. Having step-by-step guidelines for owners to follow can improve success as well. Although tempting for situational relief, drug therapy alone is minimally successful at eliminating the problem; however, medications with behavior modification will increase success, particularly in severely affected animals.<sup>3,4</sup>

### ... TO YOUR PATIENTS

Key pearls to put into practice:

- 1 Detect sound sensitivity early by asking relevant questions about response to specific noises (eg, fireworks, thunder) at each patient visit.
- 2 Advise owners to identify and encourage use of safe spots for all pets, even those not yet exhibiting a problem.
- 3 Provide tools that enable owners to identify sound sensitivity (eg, an online assessment) and treat it successfully (eg, step-by-step guidelines for desensitization and counterconditioning).

### References

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3. Sherman BL, Mills DS. Canine anxieties and phobias: an update on separation anxiety and noise aversions. *Vet Clin North Am Small Anim Pract*. 2008;38(5):1081-1106.
4. Crowell-Davis SL, Seibert LM, Sung W, Parthasarathy V, Curtis TM. Use of clomipramine, alprazolam, and behavior modification for treatment of storm phobia in dogs. *J Am Vet Med Assoc*. 2003;222(6):744-748.
5. Bowen J, Heath S. *Behaviour Problems in Small Animals; Practical Advice for the Veterinary Team*. Philadelphia, PA: Saunders Elsevier; 2005:283.
6. McCobb E, Brown E, Damiani K, Dodman N. Thunderstorm phobia in dogs: an internet survey of 69 cases. *J Am Anim Hosp Assoc*. 2001;37(4):319-324.
7. Sound sensitivity questionnaire. Ceva. <http://www.adaptil.com/uk/what-causes-stress-in-dogs/behaviourist-fear-of-fireworks-assessment>. Accessed December 7, 2016.

## Therapeutics Research Note: Mycophenolate Mofetil & Prednisone

Meningoencephalomyelitis of unknown etiology (MUE) is treated with prednisone, either alone or in combination with other immunosuppressive drugs. Mycophenolate mofetil (MMF) has been used to treat MUE in dogs but has not been assessed in a larger-scale study.

This retrospective case series described the response, adverse events, and outcomes associated with combination MMF-prednisone treatment for MUE. Partial or complete response was achieved in 95% of dogs. Hemorrhagic diarrhea was the most commonly described side effect (20%). Treatment was stopped within 14 days in affected dogs, and those cases were excluded from further statistical analysis. Larger-scale controlled prospective studies are warranted to evaluate the efficacy of MMF as an adjunct treatment for MUE.

### Source

Barnoon I, Shamir MH, Aroch I, et al. Retrospective evaluation of combined mycophenolate mofetil and prednisone treatment for meningoencephalomyelitis of unknown etiology in dogs: 25 cases (2005–2011). *J Vet Emerg Crit Care (San Antonio)*. 2016;26(1):116-124.