

Risk Factors

Half of all dogs struggle with loud noises, many to the extent that they are still scared hours or days later. For a few, the impact can last weeks.

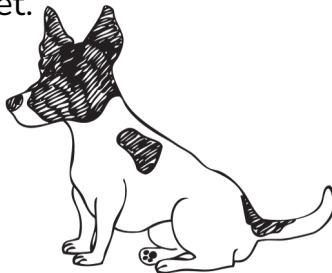
Risk factors include general anxiety, breed type, pain, and previous experience of loud noises.

How do you know if your dog is struggling, and how can you help support them?

Panic Signs

You might notice obvious signs, such as pacing, panting, and even shaking. Your dog may want to hide away, or they may seek comfort from you and become more clingy.

If your dog has an underlying health condition, symptoms such as increased heart rate and respiration may increase their risk, so it is important to discuss with your vet.



“For me, it’s never ‘just a walk’. Every outing is a fun adventure, and I take care to ensure that each dog feels safe, happy, and well-looked after.

I’m Heather, Mum to three teenagers and proud pet parent to Penny the Jack Russell, six rescue cats, and a few cheeky rescue hens.

After working in both the corporate and charity worlds, I started up my own dog walking business, combining my love of outdoors with my love of animals.

I soon realised that there is more to walking dogs than just clipping on a lead: every dog has unique needs and behaviours. So I began to study dog behaviour and now use my knowledge to ensure that each dog gets the very best experience with me.

Heather

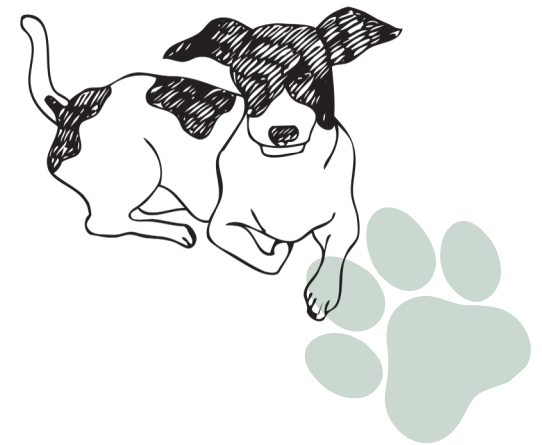
I am committed to bringing best practice to my care through ongoing learning, and I hold formal qualifications in Canine Behaviour, First Aid and Welfare. I am passionate about helping every dog to live their best life, through walks, training and equipment.

To find out more, call: 07706447261



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Cosy environment

Get your safe space set up early so that your dog can practise relaxing in it.

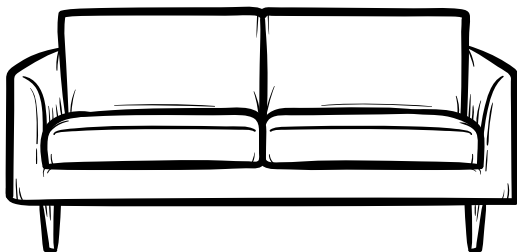
Sight: Shut the curtains and turn on the lights (including any outside lights) to block sudden flashes.

Sound: Get some music playing – something with a soft beat like soft rock or reggae is good, or opt for white/brown noise.

Smell: Familiar smells such as an old jumper, and scents such as lavender or Pet Remedy can help with relaxation.

Taste: Give your dog something to chew inside their safe space. The act of chewing naturally calms them down.

Touch: Try some slow, gentle strokes down the full length of the body, or ears. You can also use TTouch massage or acupuncture.



Training

Phobia training is best done under the guidance of a qualified trainer or behaviourist because of the many pitfalls, but the Dogs Trust has a free, 8 week program that you can download from their website.

Desensitisation

In this approach, you gradually introduce noises at a level that the dog is comfortable with, for example playing very quiet firework noises in the background. But go too quickly, and it can backfire, making your dog more anxious.

Counter conditioning

Pairing scary sounds with something good (e.g. giving a treat after each bang) tries to reprogram your dog's brain that noise is fun. But the opposite effect can occur – the dog may become scared of treats because they predict the noise.

Top tip:

Dogs can pick up on human stress. Try settling in for a movie night together, snuggled up in blankets. Just don't pick a horror film!

Consider medication

There is no shame in medicine for mental health. We would never tell our human best friend that they shouldn't take medicine for their panic attacks, and it's the same for our dogs.

There are many options available nowadays, from short-term gels that last a couple of hours, to long-term anti-anxiety medication. If your dog is one of the 31% who's welfare is severely compromised by loud noise, please go and see your vet to discuss your options.

For many dogs, pain is an underlying factor for noise phobias (a startle response can physically hurt), so ask your vet to consider a pain review too.



For more information, visit my website, or book a discovery call with me:

