



Stress, Anxiety, Fear

Stress is everywhere. We all face it. What we forget is that our pets feel stress too. And just like people, some aren't so good at dealing with it.



Our pets generally feel stress due to fear or anxiety. Just like in humans, excess stress is not good for your pet's health. Fortunately, there are a variety of options to help your pet. For a particular pet, some work better than others. You may have to try several options to figure out which works best. A combination may work well too.

Pheromones

Pheromones are chemicals from the body that pets use to communicate with each other. It's the reason cats rub their cheeks on everything, and dogs scratch the ground after they defecate. Lucky for us, people have created synthetic pheromones that can be used to mimic the happy, comfortable feeling that our pets get from pheromones.

Feliway® is for cats and is the marking scent they have on their faces. The smell lets a cat think everything is theirs, and they tend to calm down.

Adaptil™ is made for dogs and is the scent released by mother dogs. Dogs of all ages can respond and be comforted by the smell.

These products come in a spray formula or a room diffuser that plugs into the wall. If using a diffuser, you need to make sure the pheromone reaches to all areas of the house



for it to work well.

For cats that are stressed about traveling, spray some Feliway on a cloth or paper towel and place in the carrier. For dogs, you can spray some Adaptil (about 5 pumps) on a bandana and place it on your dog or rub it on his chest.

Pheromones don't work instantly. Usually, it takes 5-10 minutes to start working but you may not notice any changes until after 20-30 minutes. Give your pet enough time with the product if you are using it for specific stressful events such as a vet visit or a visitor to the house.

Body wraps

Slight pressure on the body produces a calming effect, similar to swaddling a baby. A commercial wrap, Thundershirt, is now available in a variety of sizes for both cats and dogs.



A do-it-yourself version uses an Ace bandage to apply pressure. If you use a bandage, make sure the wrap is not too tight as it may cut off circulation, especially on the back of the legs.

The calming nature of a wrap allows it to be used for many different things:

- Noises such as thunderstorms or fireworks
- Fear of people or other animals
- Anxiety due to outside animals (excessive barking or hissing)
- Aggression or chewing
- Nervous or hyperactive pets
- Traveling

However, this list is just the beginning. Many behavior problems are associated with underlying anxiety which can benefit from calming. Also, a body wrap can be used to help some puppies and dogs during training, by helping them to focus.



Herbs and Supplements

There are many herbs and supplements available that may calm your pet. Some have sedative effects while others simply relax your pet.

Lavender: This oil has a calming effect. You have to be careful since the oil is toxic if eaten. Instead, put oil



on a cotton ball and rub it on furniture in the house or on a towel in the carrier for traveling. It doesn't need to smell strong to be effective.

Valerian root: This herb calms your pet while also making him sleepy. This herb smells like dirty socks so if it's stinky, it's probably a good quality.

L-theanine: This is an amino acid that can relieve anxiety. It is found in many anti-anxiety products that contain a combination of herbs and supplements. Anxitane® by Virbac and Composure™ by Vetri-Science both contain L-theanine.

Melatonin: This is a hormone that has been shown to have anti-anxiety effects. It can be helpful for dogs with noise phobias. It works best when given 30 minutes before the storm or fireworks.

Bach Flower Remedies

Bach flower remedies is a combination of extracts from flowers. There are 38 different remedies with a variety of effects. Many will help with anxiety and fear. We will determine the best formula that will work for your pet. The extracts are in a liquid form so they are easy to give and very safe.



Food

There are some prescription foods available that have added ingredients with a calming effect on your pet. It can be feed as the sole diet, or supplement it with your pet's current food.

Medications

Your pet may need anti-anxiety medicine. Most of these medicines require 4-6 weeks before you can see results. Since every pet is an individual, you may have to try different medications to determine which works best. Ask the doctor which medicine your pet should try.



Your pets will appreciate your efforts to help them feel better!