

*Anxiety in dogs:
Keeping your dog
relaxed and safe on
The 4th of July*



FOR many dogs and puppies, the 4th of July celebration can be a nightmare of anxiety, fearful and phobic reactions. Some dogs with sound sensitivity issues experience this daily with the startling sounds of loud trucks or motorcycles. These poor pups may also have this intensified with the loud screams and booms of fireworks during this summer's 4th of July celebration. This is a time to help keep your dog or puppy safe and relaxed. Here are some 4th of July Safety Tips for the [Anxious Dog](#).

- **Keep your dog inside:** Many anxious dogs on the 4th of July have been known to run away from home, jump yard walls or fences, and dogs or puppies that are tied up outside may run away in fear and have so much fear and anxiety that they choke and strangle themselves if left tied up. **(Never have your dog tied up outside without human supervision.) Keep your dog inside on the 4th of July.** Many dogs run away each 4th of July and they can be hit or run over by a car, or picked up as a lost stray by animal control.
- **Stay home with your dog:** Just because your dog or puppy is inside does not mean they will be safe or relaxed. Many anxious and fearful or phobic dogs on the 4th of July will become destructive in the house, this may include, but not limited to trying to jump through open or closed windows, pulling down window curtains or blinds, jumping at clawing or scratching at doors or screens to try to escape, running and hiding under furniture, destructive chewing, marking or fearfully urinating or defecating in the house, pacing, hyperventilating, and even self-mutilating behavior. Some anxious dogs left in dog crates, kennels or runs may try to chew their way out and do damage to their teeth and gums, try to claw or paw their way out doing damage to their nails, pads, and feet. Don't come home to a bloody mess or a bloody dog.
- **Desensitize your dog:** Several weeks before the 4th of July, start a program of behavior modification to desensitize your dog to the loud sounds of the 4th of July fireworks. Desensitization is exposing your dog to the fearful sounds in

a slow, quiet and progressive way, pairing a positive reinforcer like a very high value food treat, toy reward, pleasant massage, or petting, with the sounds of fireworks. You can download fireworks sounds from iTunes, and begin by playing the sounds of fireworks at a very low and non-threatening volume. Play with your dog and reward calm relaxing behavior. Begin to teach your dog to relax on cue by pairing the timing of the reward at the exact moment of your dog's relaxed behavior, while at the same time, saying the word "RELAX." If your timing is just right, most dogs' can be trained to relax in about 20 to 30 very short desensitization sessions. Always start with the sound very low, and over time, as your dog learns to relax to the sounds, gently and gradually increase the volume and continue to reward and put on cue relaxed behavior. Always be careful not to flood your dog too fast with too loud of stimulation before your dog is relaxed and conditioned to the quieter sounds. Take your time and do this slowly and gradually building on small successes. If you are not having success, and if your dog seems to be more fearful or anxious, always consult with a professional dog behaviorist who specializes in dog anxiety and phobias.

- **Consider anti-anxiety medication:** Talk to your Veterinarian about short-term anti-anxiety medication for your dog or puppy. In some cases medication may be warranted and a needed option. You need to weigh your dog's physical well-being and emotional well-being over short-term one time sedation medication. There are many safe FDA approved [behavioral medications for your dog](#), their fears, phobias and anxiety.
- **Non medical anti-anxiety alternatives:** While there have been some anecdotal reports of limited success with natural remedies like certain herbal, and holistic remedies, and also some pheromone products that make claims to help with fears and anxiety, there has been no scientific evidence that any of these products have any statistically significance in improvement for treating real anxiety. There have been some early preliminary studies that show some statistically significant results in decreasing mild anxiety with a product called The Thunder Shirt. Studies show that the tight fit of The Thunder Shirt has helped some dogs with some mild anxiety. Try these products with caution and be careful of unsubstantiated claims.

About the author: [Bill Glatzel](#), M.S., Harvard Educated Applied Clinical Animal Behaviorist / Dog Behaviorist is the Executive Director & Head of Research for (ACCBS) Arizona Center for Canine Behavioral Studies), and is the Founder and Director of [TLC K9 Academy - Phoenix Dog Training](#), a National Dog Training Company headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona, Specializing in Difficult and Severe Behavior Disorders in Dogs. Glatzel also heads up a Team of Professionals who teaches and certifies trainers throughout the world in the latest Science Based Dog Training and Behavior Modification Methods for helping dogs today. For more information contact Bill Glatzel local at 480-502-3647 or toll free at 1-888-502-DOGS (3647) or email <mailto:info@tlck9.com>