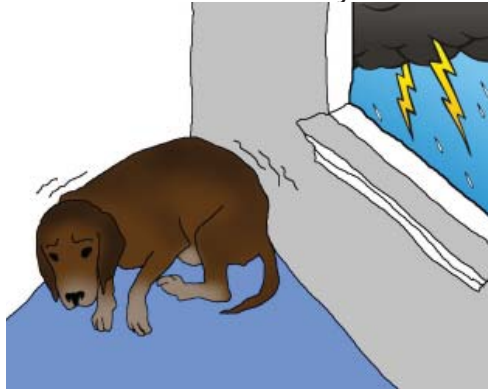




The Big Bang: dealing with thunderstorm anxiety



Thunderstorm anxiety is a common behavioral condition affecting our canine companions. Research suggests that up to twenty percent of dogs will experience storm phobia severe enough to warrant medical treatment. Fears and phobias can develop from a single experience or from continued exposure to a fearful stimulus. Although some dogs react with a mild fear response of panting and pacing, others get extremely agitated and may panic and become destructive. With multiple exposures to a fearful event, the behavior may intensify.

With some animals, owner attempts to calm the pet with increased attention or affection may actually intensify the response. It is recommended that one not overly dote on one's pet in the face of thunderstorm anxiety as this may be regarded as a reward for the abnormal behavior. Although it may be difficult, one should try to ignore any fearful behavior that occurs. Do not punish a pet when scared as this only confirms that there is something to be feared and usually worsens the fear response. In addition, if the pet owner is upset or anxious about the pet's behavior, this adds to the pet's anxiety.

The most effective treatment for thunderstorm anxiety is systematic desensitization and counter-conditioning. This should be done at a time of year when thunderstorms occur less frequently enabling greater control over the situation and time to work on a training program without having to deal with actual events. Audio recordings of storms designed to reproduce stimuli for desensitization training are available.

Medications may be useful in some cases but should only be given under veterinary supervision. Sedatives and anti-anxiety

drugs must be given so they take effect before any noise starts or panic sets in - usually an hour or more prior to the event. Sedatives may help the pet sleep through the event or be less aware of the stimuli but do not reduce anxiety. Anti-anxiety drugs may reduce anxiety and panic but may not calm the dog sufficiently. Other medications, such as certain antidepressants, can be used on an ongoing basis to try to prevent or reduce the effect of the stimulus should it arise. Also, the dog appeasing pheromone (DAP®) might also be considered concurrently with other drugs.

During storms, ensure all the windows and doors are shut so the sound is deadened as much as possible. Try taking the pet to a room or area of the house where the stimuli will be the mildest and the dog can be most easily distracted. Try to provide background sounds from the radio or television. Owners must not respond to the noises themselves and should try to involve the pet in some form of active game. Providing plenty of familiar toys and games are common ways to distract the pet. Having a friend's dog come to visit may be an excellent strategy for storm phobic dogs. Keeping the two pets together during the storm and playing with the non-fearful dog may help encourage the anxious pet to join in play and reduce fear.

Storm phobia can be traumatic for both pets and owners. This problem should not be ignored if it happens only intermittently or for a few days each year. Instigate a desensitization program once the season is over to ensure one's dog loses fear of the situation. Currently, research is being conducted at the University of Georgia Veterinary Teaching Hospital to investigate the efficacy of behavior modification and DAP® in the treatment of storm phobia in dogs. Contact our clinic if you are interested in participating in this study or wish to discuss the treatment of storm phobia in dogs.

Internet Pharmacies



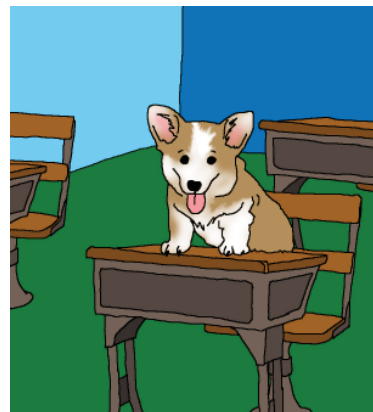
Most have seen the advertisements featuring celebrities encouraging pet owners to purchase their companion's pharmaceuticals from Internet sources. "After all," it is claimed, "they are exactly the same products." But are they? The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has strong warnings

for consumers who purchase medications through such sources. The FDA has found that some medicines sold online are counterfeit or "copycat" medicines; have expired; are unsafe to use with other medicines or products; are not labeled, stored, or shipped at appropriate temperatures; or have other serious problems.

The manufacturers of veterinary pharmaceuticals sell their companion animal products to only licensed veterinarians. Therefore, if these medications are offered from Internet or mail order sources, they are unethically diverted from normal distribution channels. Indeed, veterinarians regularly receive uninvited solicitations from dubious companies requesting large scale purchases of these products from manufacturers for redistribution across the country and throughout the world. For the above reasons, manufacturers will not guarantee products obtained through such sources.

In these days of economic hardship, all look for ways to cut costs. However, the perceived savings one may have from purchasing medications from online or mail order sources may quickly evaporate in the face of product failure or subsequent medical complications. For more information, go to the FDA's Consumer Safety Guide at <http://www.fda.gov>.

Puppy Preschool



Shoal Creek Animal Clinic is now offering puppy preschool classes for clients with new canine companions. Puppy preschool is an integral part in the development of your new canine family member. The critical period of behavioral development called the socialization period is generally regarded

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to be between one to four months of age in puppies. During this period, it is essential to introduce puppies to as many other pets and people as possible. However, this socialization must be done carefully as puppies are at increased risk for contracting various infectious diseases. Because all of the participants in puppy preschool must have had at least one vaccination and be generally healthy, puppy preschool presents the safest opportunity to begin socializing your pet. In addition to socialization, puppy preschool classes offer an introduction to positive training methods and veterinary care. Positive training becomes important when attempting to prevent "bad" puppy behaviors from developing (jumping, chewing/biting, house soiling, etc.). Through puppy preschool you can learn to perform routine preventive health care for your companions and receive instruction on emergency care. Please call the clinic for more information on our puppy classes.

Staff News

Emily Wallace, our newest veterinary assistant, grew up in Madison, GA and attended Morgan County High School. She is a sophomore at UGA majoring in Biological Sciences and plans to attend the UGA College of Veterinary Medicine. Emily loves the outdoors and enjoys hiking, swimming, and camping. Emily's favorite pastimes are reading, playing the piano, spending time with family, having movie nights with friends, and staying up late studying! Emily has a seven month old puppy she rescued named Sam. His breed heritage remains a mystery but he has the most important trait of all breeds -- a loving personality!

Readers' Choice Award

The doctors and staff at Shoal Creek Animal Clinic are both honored and humbled to have been voted one of Athens' best veterinary clinics in the annual Athens Banner Herald Readers' Choice Awards. Each year, readers of the Athens Banner Herald have the opportunity to vote on the leading service providers in our community. Shoal Creek Animal Clinic is currently celebrating its fifteenth anniversary of serving pet health needs in Athens-Clarke County. It has always been our goal to offer the best veterinary care possible and to maintain a service attitude to our patients and clients. We want to say thank you to our clients for their confidence and for voting us one of Athens best!

-Dr. Askren, Dr. Elder, and all the staff at Shoal Creek Animal Clinic



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