

Penn State studies storm-phobic canines

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Penn State University researchers have determined pet owners can't resolve storm phobia in their dogs, but having a multi-dog home may reduce stress.

The study is among the first to measure, non-invasively, the production of a specific stress hormone produced by both dogs and humans.

Dr. Nancy Dreschel, a veterinarian who conducted the study, said, "There were no effects of the owners' behavior or the quality of the dog-owner relationship on the stress hormone response that we measured in the canine. However, the presence of other dogs in the household was linked to less pronounced stress reactivity and more rapid recovery of the thunderstorm-phobic animal."

Researchers said thunderstorm-anxious dogs not only show classic signs of fear, including whining and hiding, but also experience a 207 percent spike in the production of cortisol, a hormone produced during stress.

Dreschel doesn't recommend owners of storm-phobic canines get additional dogs. She notes there was no difference in the behavior of dogs in multi-dog households vs. dogs in single-dog households, although there was a significant reduction in cortisol.

The study is detailed in the December issue of the journal, *Applied Animal Behavior Science*.

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