

Providing a hiding place

When we were developing the questionnaire that you completed online, one of our findings was that dogs that were able to hide somewhere in the house showed significantly lower levels of distress during loud noise events.

All dogs that are afraid of loud noises need a place to hide from them, but if your dog got a score of 8 or above on the "coping behaviour" part of the questionnaire, it is particularly important that you set up a suitable hiding place. This is because higher scores on this part of the test indicate that a dog is having real difficulty dealing with loud noises, and is likely to get worse over time unless it is given a better opportunity to cope.

To prepare a suitable hiding place for your dog, identify somewhere in the house that is:

- Dark
- Quiet
- Away from disturbing activity

Typically dogs choose to hide in places like this, such as behind the sofa, under the bed or in cupboards. This gives us an indication of where dogs prefer to hide. If your dog already goes to a place like this, then you can use this as your dog's hiding place. Otherwise, identify somewhere in the house that fits with these requirements.

Try to set up the hiding place at least a week ahead of any loud noise events that you are expecting.

The hiding place can be made more secure in the following ways:

- Keep windows and curtains closed.
- Turn off lights.
- Provide a comfortable bed with extra blankets for your dog to dig into or hide underneath.
- Put a water bowl, some chews and toys in the room where the hiding place is located.
- Install an Adaptil diffuser in the room where the hiding place is located, close to where the dog's bed is located.

Make this hiding place available to your dog at *all* times of day and night, regardless of whether you are at home or not.

Your dog is more likely to use the hiding place if he/she likes to go there at other times.

Here are some ways to encourage your dog to like the new hiding place:

Take your dog to the hiding place each day to give him some food treats or a chew. If you find your dog is in the hiding place, offer him some treats and praise.