



The Stressed Pet

For so many of us ... and you know who you are ... stress has become a 'normal' part of our daily lives. We tend to over-plan and over-do things with the precious amount of time available to us each day. And far too often, we feel we have to perform *perfectly* in everything we do, or we will be judged harshly for being "human". For those individuals (and, believe me, I still tip-toe that same path on occasion), I can assure you that it's OK to let go, slow down, catch your breath, and enjoy the moment. Your friends and family will love you just as much even if you are not Superwoman or Superman. So find strategies to help you toss your cape aside, and slow down a bit.

But what about our pets ??? We seldom give much thought to the stress our pets have to endure. They don't go to work, they don't have bills to pay, they don't have sick children or grandkids that occupy every waking moment, they don't have to figure out these complex set of instructions to set up a new TV. But we recognize that many times, our pets are visibly stressed and filled with anxiety when: you introduce a new pet into the house ... when the UPS guy rings the doorbell ... when they are taken to the groomer ... when construction crews constantly tromp through the house while remodeling a kitchen ... when they are boarded at a kennel while you go out of town ... when a thunderstorm rattles and shakes the house ... when you take them to the vet clinic ... when the next-door neighbor fires up the lawnmower ... when they see a neighbor's feisty cat on the other side of the window.

But many pets are also stressed by the over-activity that we create, which happens most frequently during major holidays. We create stress by piling on more things to do, and many pets feed off those emotional sparks and changes. Add to that the distressing popping of fireworks (4th of July and New Years Eve). Additionally, a house full of guests can be very disturbing. Kids and Grandkids are a delight to have around for a few days, but their enthusiastic presence can send the Cat, and sometimes the Dog, scurrying under the bed to hide for several days.

The good news is that there are several different strategies as well as natural remedies to help relieve your pets' anxiety. Just as with people, not every approach or remedy works for every pet. You'll likely need to **experiment** to see what is most effective for your pets.

The first thing I encourage is to have a **safe haven** where your pet can go to feel at ease and away from disruptive commotion. Sort of a 'panic room'. It may be a closet, a crate or kennel, a bedroom or bathroom or basement. Let them decide where they feel most comfortable.

With dogs, it's often useful to try a **'thunder' shirt**, or fairly tightly wrapped garment. By applying constant, gentle pressure, thunder shirts can offer comfort for mildly stressed pets. Also, with some dogs, if you **engage them with an enjoyable activity**, such as giving them a treat, or encouraging them to play while a stressful situation is going on, this can serve as a beneficial and welcome distraction.

And don't forget **EXERCISE** and activity ! Daily brisk walks can be extremely beneficial for both pets and people ! If your dogs love to chase balls, then engage with them. If you can get your cat to chase a tethered toy, then get them moving. Be aware that many cats will be MORE stressed by trying to chase laser pointers ! Don't use them.

Many pet owners have found their pets respond well to **Adaptil (dogs) and Feliway (cats)** that come in a pump spray, or a plug-in infuser. These products mimic pheromones, which are chemical substances naturally produced and released into the environment which can affect the behavior of other animals, and most often has a calming, soothing effect. Many veterinary clinics use Adaptil and Feliway to help relieve stress among pets. In households with multiple cats, Feliway can have a noticeable calming effect to reduce the anxiety created by territoriality or by the subtle aggression of an "alpha-kitty".

These simple techniques don't always work, however, and sometimes we are not around to comfort them when a storm rages outside, or fireworks explode down the street. So sometimes, we need to resort to providing medications to help calm the nerves.

T-Away Essential Oil Blend (by Young Living) combines essential oils from tangerine, lavender, chamomile, sandalwood and frankincense to help reduce anxiety while supporting feelings of comfort in pets. Applied directly to the fur on the sides of pets, behind the ears and the bottoms of paws can provide a calming sensation.

While **Probiotics** are readily available for pets, the sad reality is two-fold: 1) there are not a lot of research studies available to determine which probiotics are most beneficial for pets (keep in mind that the digestive tract of pets is significantly different from that of people, so what works for people often does not work for pets). And 2) since probiotics are supplements and not drugs, there is no regulation for manufacturing them, so there is no guarantee of quality with MANY brands out there.

Likely the most researched and effective **Probiotic** available for pets happens to provide a calming effect on pets: **Purina ProPlan's Calming Care**. Calming Care is given daily as granules mixed into food. It may take up to 6 weeks for full effect, so be patient. You can order Calming care from our website: www.CarolinaValuePetCare.com. On homepage, click Food Delivery, then Purina Pro Plan Vet Direct, then set up an account (for newbies), and order Calming Care for home delivery.

From a personal perspective, my wife Catherine and I have given a product derived from green tea leaves, **L-Theanine**, to our terrified little Corgi-mix Lucy on a **daily** basis. She is noticeably more relaxed and socially engaging when she's on it. Understand that for the vast majority of dogs, L-Theanine is not a supplement that you can just when you need it (like a Valium). **It MUST be given on a regular basis to achieve a calming effect.**

L-Theanine is readily available online and in pharmacies. Make sure the active form of L-Theanine listed on the bottle is **Suntheanine**. You can find it in a variety of strengths: 100mg, 150mg, 200mg, 250mg capsules, and it even comes in a liquid, making it convenient to give to dogs that are fussy about taking tablets or capsules. **Starting at a dose of once a day** to begin with, a general guideline for dosing with L-Theanine when stress is high (traveling, going to the groomer, going to the vet, thunderstorms, etc) would be:

0-10# - 50mg every 8 to 12 hours as needed (2 to 3 times daily)
10-20# - 100mg every 8 to 12 hours as needed
20-40# - 200mg every 8 to 12 hours as needed
40-60# - 300mg every 8 to 12 hours as needed
60-80# - 400mg every 8 to 12 hours as needed
80+# - 500mg every 8 to 12 hours as needed

Many pet parents want to know about using **CBD Oil** or **CBD Chewable treats**. Current uses in dogs and cats have ranged from anxiety and behavior issues ... seizure disorders ... pain management ... arthritis ... chronic illnesses. Finding **reliable** information on how much to give / proper dosing for pets for specific health and medical conditions can be the biggest challenge. But I definitely believe that CBD has great potential to help pets. FYI, I personally recommend **Element Health's** line of CBD for Pets. They create a pure, full-spectrum form of CBD oil. .Check them out at <https://elementhealthsupply.com/> (And try the coupon code TnankYou to save \$20.)

A long-time favorite of mine for Cats is good ol' **Catnip**. I recommend putting a fresh, new catnip toy in your kitty's carrier when you are going to transport them somewhere. While nothing works all the time, it is certainly worth trying to see if it will help your stressed kitty travel more comfortably.

Ashwagandha (Indian Ginseng) has received a great amount of attention in the last few years for its use in people to help relieve stress, boost the immune system, and its anti-inflammatory benefits. Fortunately, it can be safely given to pets as well. As a guideline for Dogs, give 250mg of Ashwagandha for every 15 lbs of body weight twice a day. For Cats, give 100 to 150mg for a 10 lb cat twice daily.

While space prevents me from giving complete details, other products worth considering include **Chamomile ... 5-HTP ... Vitamin B6** (as Pyridoxine HCl) ... **Rhodiola ... GABA ... and Tulsi** (Holy Basil). All are known to be safe in pets when given at appropriate doses.

Of course, if you feel the need to try some of these remedies on yourself, I think you may find great value and benefit to enable you to better navigate a stress-filled lifestyle. Be sure to send us a photo of you fashioning that cool Thunder Shirt ! And **please let us hear from you if you have used a product or tried a strategy that helps keep your pet calm.**