

# When your dog becomes a 'scaredy cat'!

Nervous and agitated, Rocky stares with fear at the hooded man coming towards him - he shrinks back in panic at a half-sagging balloon on the field; these are typical situations where your dog may appear not to recognise the actuality and panics, not knowing what to do in these situations. Some objects, people or sounds can give dogs such a fright that they tear off into the distance in fear. Owners are powerless to help. The experts from the specialist retail chain Maxi Zoo explain where such fear in dogs comes from and what one can do about it.

## ORIGIN OF THESE REACTIONS

The reactions described above can have various origins. Some breeds of dog are by nature more anxious than others. Insecurity is often passed down from the parent animals to their pups who see the adults as role models. If the mother hides away behind the sofa during a thunderstorm, her offspring learns what seems to be the best way to behave in this situation. Whelping age is enormously powerful in developing anxiety. If the young dog doesn't learn certain things during the impressionable phase (up to around the 16th week),



he can later over-react because of insecurity. One example: if an animal grows up in the country and relates only to a few people, then later on, a trip to the town centre with its multitude of people can cause grave fear.

## PACK RELATIONSHIP

The relationship between a dog and its pack is enormously important with anxious dogs. Speaking to the trembling Rocky in consoling tones on New Year's Eve only makes things worse. The same goes for 'walkies' if dog and owner land in a difficult situation. If the young master quickens his pace, he himself becomes insecure and anxious that his dog could react in panic, the sensitive animal notices straight away what's happening and feels justified that there's every reason to be afraid. Again, consoling words and gesticulations only reinforce this impression. What helps, however, is to let your dog see that you are in control of such situations and that it can rely on you! If you like, a good dog trainer can also support you in this.

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## HOW TO SHOULDER YOUR PET'S FEAR

Your dog must be able to trust you if it's going to conquer its anxiety. Therefore, you should always demonstrate to it that you have a situation in hand.

Here are a few tips for relaxed dog walking – despite daunting obstacles.

- Stay calm, don't allow yourself to let on anything and ignore perceived dangers.
- Keep to your normal walking rhythm and avoid standing still.

- Without making any fuss, take your dog to the side, which is away from the threat of fear.
- Don't pay your dog too much attention after surviving a situation - just behave as though it had been the most normal thing in the world.

If you've just obtained a pup, do as much as possible during the impressionable phase: visit a zoo, walk through the pedestrian zones, go to the sports field, the river bank etc. - this way your pet will absorb many worthwhile impressions.



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