

## Anxiety Aids

### What are Anxiety Aids?

Anxiety aids are products that can help support your dog during times of stress, anxiety or fear. Generally these products are not a replacement for training but rather an add-on to try and help your dog feel better in the short term, so the training will be more effective in the long run.



### Do Anxiety Aids Work?

Unfortunately, very few anxiety aids have been scientifically tested for effectiveness, and often those that have, are tested by the companies that make them. So, for the most part, reports of their effectiveness is based on owner observations and stories, many of which vary from “no effect” to “works miracles”, so they seem to work for some animals and not for others. Most trainers look at anxiety aids as products that might help and at the very least probably won’t hurt, so they might be worth exploring if your dog is having anxiety based problems and you don’t mind spending the money on them to give them a try.

## Herbs and Supplements

### What are they?

If you visit the supplement aisle of a pet store you can find everything from pills & powders to flavored chews and drops to add to water to help your dog with their anxiety. Just like with people supplements, quality can vary by brand and ingredient. *Bach’s Rescue Remedy*® has been on the market for a long time and has gained the support of many pet owners as a good homeopathic remedy. Another popular supplement is *Composure*® which uses a complex of ingredients including L-Theanine, a calming ingredient from green tea. It is now even possible to get hemp based CBD oil from cottage companies in some places and there have been reports that CBD can have a calming effect as well (however, THC, the hallucinogen in marijuana is toxic to dogs so the CBD oil must come from hemp to be safe & legal).

Keep in mind when you look at these products that some are only made to be given “once in a while” while others recommend 1 or 2 times daily with meals and you should pick one that is appropriate for your dog’s situation. Whichever supplement or remedy you are interested in trying, be sure to speak with your veterinarian first; supplements can have side effects, drug interactions and overdose risk just like drugs, and professional advice should be sought before giving them to your pet.

## Synthetic Pheromones

### What are they?

Pheromones are chemical substances that animals naturally produce and give off that can unconsciously impact the behavior of other animals. Some brands like Adaptyl, Comfort Zone, and Sentry have created synthetic pheromones that mimic the ones that a female dog gives off when she is nursing her puppies that has a calming effect on them. They have taken this substance and put it into room diffusers, sprays, lotions, infused collars, and even toys with it claiming that when your dog breathes it, he will become calmer and less stressed. These products do eventually wear off, so if you are going to try them, be sure to read the label as to how long they last and determine how fresh the product is.

## Wraps & Jackets

### What are they?

Anxiety Wraps, shirts, and jackets work on a basis of applying pressure to an animal's body and the pressure has a calming effect, much the way a good massage can help some people relax or a swaddled baby stop fussing. Some of the more common brands available are Anxiety Wrap and Thundershirt, however there are also instructions on the internet about how to make your own using a stretchy ace bandage or old t-shirt if you are interested in trying but not quite ready to spend the money on one. While there is an advantage to the wraps in that they don't rely on chemicals to work, they can present some physical risks if left on for prolonged amounts of time. Dogs can get tangled in them, chew them, or get too warm if they are left on in the heat. Pets should only wear wraps when supervised closely.

## Prescription Drugs

### What are they?

First off, only a veterinarian can legally recommend, prescribe, or dispense controlled substances such as prescription drugs, so your vet is the only one that can legally recommend and prescribe a specific drug for your dog and his specific needs. There are several types of drugs that were created originally for use in human medicine to help treat anxiety and other psychiatric conditions that have been shown to be effective in some cases with animals, however the dosages are usually different than they are for people and some of the drugs are toxic, so *DO NOT EVER give your dog people medicines without specific directions from your vet to do so!*

Many people are reluctant to talk with their veterinarian about behavior drugs because they are afraid that their dog will act "drugged out" all the time. With some drugs that is possible, and all drugs have side effects; you are adding a chemical to a biologically complex being after all. However, not all behavior drugs will alter your dog's personality, and in severe cases of anxiety where an animal is truly suffering, they can bring relief and brain chemical balance. In most cases, prescription drugs are viewed as an option when the behavior problem is so severe that normal interventions are not working. Additionally, if one behavior drug is not working or having bad side effects, there is enough of a variety on the market that your veterinarian can work with you and try another that might be more helpful.

## Other Aids

- Some CDs have been produced with special music to calm dogs using the speed or rate of the music to slow your dog's heartbeat. These are sometimes helpful for noise phobias.
- There are many balms and lotions that incorporate lavender, chamomile, and other calming smells into their mix, however there is very little evidence that dogs find the same smells calming that we do.
- Exercise and play have been shown to help in the severity of anxiety in both people and animals. It doesn't cost anything and it is something you and your dog can enjoy together!

***\*The information presented here is for supportive and informative purposes only; it is not intended to diagnose, treat, or cure any behavioral issue and is not a substitute for professional help. With any behavior problem that persists or worsens, please seek help from a qualified behavior professional.***