

# Don't Panic, Help is on the Way

**Q** *My dog turns into a panic puddle whenever we need to take him to the veterinary clinic. He seems to know during the car ride and goes crazy. What can I do to calm him down?*

● Arden Moore ● Steve Brooks

**F**ORTUNATELY, WE ARE LEARNING MORE ABOUT HOW TO IN-STILL A FEELING OF SAFETY AND CALMNESS in four-legged puddle panics. For starters, dogs are more astute about their trusted people's emotional states than many people realize.

It's a good bet that before you take your dog to the veterinary clinic, you may feel a bit apprehensive, a little frustrated and maybe even worried that your dog is going to struggle and exhibit signs of fear, anxiety and stress.

Don't get impatient and push or force your dog into a carrier or yell at him out of frustration when putting him in your vehicle. Instead, be gentle as you would putting a baby in a car seat and say to your dog in a confident tone, "I got this."

Spray your dog's carrier and your vehicle before the trip with Adaptil, a commercial spray that contains canine pheromones that help calm some dogs. See if you can do a 'trial run' by calling in advance when the clinic lobby is quiet to bring in your dog for the receptionist to greet and hand a treat. Then leave. You are building up a pleasant connection with the clinic.

Avoid waiting in a crowded lobby. Tell the staff you have an anxious or fearful dog and arrange to stay in your vehicle with your pet in the parking lot until an exam room is ready. The staff can text you when the room is ready.

Initially – or in extreme panic situations – consult your veterinarian about possibly giving your dog-calming supplements ahead of your visit. Popular choices are zylkene and Composure Pro. Or medications such as trazodone or gabapentin to help reduce emotional stress.

I'm certified in Fear Free handling and I encourage you to consider taking your dog to veterinarians, groomers and other pet professionals who are certified in Fear Free handling. Learn more by visiting [www.fearfreepets.com](http://www.fearfreepets.com).

The bottom line is that your dog needs and deserves to be regularly examined by a veterinarian to keep him healthy. Make sure you stay calm to the clinic, inside and on the way home. And remember, you got this! 🐾

**ARDEN MOORE** hosts the *Oh Behave* weekly radio show on *Pet Life Radio.com* and is founder of the *Pet First Aid 4U*. Learn more at [www.ardenmoore.com](http://www.ardenmoore.com).

**I**F YOUR DOG PERCEIVES THE VET CLINIC AS SCARY (due to a prior bad experience) or too exciting with all those scents, submissive urinating may occur. The good news? Most dogs can overcome this issue.

Building confidence is key. Use positive reinforcement to teach tricks and obedience skills. A confident dog usually won't piddle or panic in the car. During the confidence-building stage, you might even consider using a Vet that makes house calls.

## *Use gradual exposure and counter conditioning to the car & Vet*

The best way to keep your dog calm is to take them to the Vet when they don't have to go. Drive to the clinic and sit in the parking lot. Love on your dog, feed amazing tasty dog bites, play a safe game of tug in the parking lot, and then drive home.

Repeat driving to the Vet—but this time, get out of the car and offer treats and love to your pooch. On the third trip, take them inside the Vet's office and give a favorite treat or toy. Have the staff feed your pooch A-list treats and give your pup some love!

## **CAR & VET ANXIETY CALMING Tips:**

- Thunder Shirt: acupressure points help dogs relax
- Car crate or doggie seatbelt
- Calming Cap™: cuts down vision (they can still see but its less scary)
- Rescue Remedy: eases panic, terror, and feelings of losing control
- Canine Appeasing Pheromones (collar or spray): provides well-being and reassurance
- Lavender Oil: reduces anxiety (combined with massage)
- Squeeze Tube: Brooks' homemade salmon pâté, peanut butter, cheese ...
- Ask your Vet about CBD or anti-anxiety meds

Watch for signs of submission before they tinkle: curling up, putting their ears back, flopping on their back, or crouching down. At the first sign of submissive behavior—immediately ignore, turn, and walk away. As you observe the submissive display dissipate, acknowledge and comfort your dog.

Potty mistakes will happen, but you never want to punish your pooch, as it tends to make the problem worse. If you catch them in the act, try to get them outside immediately. Don't throw a fit or put their nose in it; avoid bringing attention to it!

Remember to manage water intake before getting in the car and drive with mellow, relaxing music. Be sure to arrive at the Vet early, wait in the parking lot and have the office call you when it's time or arrange to slip in the back door. Offer treats and a potty break before entering. This way, your dog will be acclimated and unafraid of the experience. 🐾

**STEVE BROOKS (CPDT-KA)**, Certified Professional Dog Trainer (CPDT/KA), Canine Behavioral Expert and author of *DOG BITES* with STEVE BROOKS, shares 20 years of training techniques using "dog bites" as rewards for good behavior. [SteveBrooksK9U.com](http://SteveBrooksK9U.com)