

Natural calming methods – a t-shirt! It really works.

According to Chloe my two and a half year old Old English Sheepdog, the thunder season has started. I am not a believer in the supernatural or hands reaching from beyond. But, this is odd, Chloe was never frightened of thunder, loud noises or anything really. However, Lennie my Bearded Collie was frightened of life itself, basically because of his Addison's Disease which exaggerates stress as it affects the Adrenal Glands, an Addisonian dog cannot cope with stress. That led me to try and find safe alternative ways of dealing with stress for him. As many people know I lost Lennie last July at a grand old age of nearly 14 years old, an achievement with all his medical issues. I had presumed that I would then soon adjust to a house with non stressed dogs!!

Back to Chloe, this is 'very' weird, since Lennie died Chloe seems to have taken over some of his funny ways. It is almost as if he has a word with her from time to time!!!! Yes sounds very mad to me. So now we have a previously brave teenager who has developed a complete neurosis about the window shutters banging and one night last week kept us awake until six am purely it seems because she was frightened of the noise from the rain outside. One another day during the week she suddenly appeared at my side with 'that look', she was frightened of a noise, in the distance, of thunder. This really is odd, Chloe has always been fine with these things until the last six months.

Which moves me on to trying to help her with these 'new' problems. At 06.00am last week I resorted to putting Chloe in one of my TShirts-----instant relaxation. I have used this method over the years to calm Lennie when he was stressed over thunder and fireworks. It is worth 'filing' away in your memory just in case. The light touch of your TShirt, it must be one of yours, used, not a new one, gives the dog the reassurance. The light touch on the body informing the brain that you are there with them. It is similar to a child, if a child is stressed and frightened, they go to Mum or Dad for a cuddle, reassurance and can often be persuaded back to sleep with a 'comfort blanket', it is the same principle. It has amazed me each time it works, and it certainly amazes Jim who is very sceptical about these 'weird' ideas of mine. But work it does.

This led me to delve a little deeper and do some investigation. I had heard of TTouch a lot through my problems with Lennie. There is an official way of touching them which does need training. But in my limited way I spent hours just stroking Lennie in circular movements with the fingertips when he was in an Addison's crisis, without fail it calmed him down. The method is over 30 years old. According to the information I have obtained TTouch lowers the output of cortisol which in turns produces a surge of two of the 'feel good' chemicals. I am trying to get further information on this as I feel it may well be useful with Chloe in the future. There are also 'wraps' available to help with various ailments. A dog in pain can often be seen to curl up and go to sleep with a wrap on. Again as yet I have not found sufficient details to know how useful they are. My older Old English Sheepdog has severe Hip Dysplasia and these wraps are recommended for that. However, I have spent the weekend trying to get my own version, a crepe bandage, around Sandy who thinks Mum has gone quite mad. She will not stand still long enough for me to arrange it around her body-----I suspect in her case the TShirt would work better, but it is a bit hot on the Algarve for her to be wearing a TShirt all day. So I cannot say whether the wrap will help Sandy or not yet.

I will keep up the research on these ideas, I honestly feel if you can answer the problems with out resorting to chemicals it is better. I was offered a doggy prozac for Chloe at one stage and have it in my doggy medical kit but am avoiding using it!!!

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Jan Cobley

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