

# Newfie News



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## Feeling Stressed? Your Newf Likely is Too

As humans, we've all experienced stress. Perhaps it was school or work related, caused by a relationship with a friend or loved one, an uncomfortable position we've been in, or being in the midst of a pandemic. Dogs experience stress too. In fact, recent research found that 72.5% of dogs expressed anxiety-like behavior (according to a questionnaire completed by owners). Research also suggests that some breeds are more prone to anxiety than others, and while Newfoundlands do not fall in the "anxious" group, most are no stranger to stress.

### What causes stress?

Many things can cause stress in dogs, but the most common result from fear. We've all known a Newfie or other dog who was afraid of thunder, fireworks, or other loud noises, or a dog who became very stressed from car rides or visits to the vet. Unknown people or animals, visual stimuli (like a leash or a man with a beard), new or strange situations and environments (such as preparing for a move), or surfaces like grass or wood floors can also be stressful for dogs.

Separation anxiety affects approximately 14 percent of dogs. Dogs with separation anxiety are unable to comfort themselves when they are left alone or separated from their family members, which can result in urinating and defecating in the house, destructive behavior, and barking.

Older dogs can be affected by age-related anxiety associated with cognitive dysfunction syndrome (CDS). In dogs with CDS, memory, learning, perception, and awareness start to decline, which understandably leads to confusion and anxiety in senior dogs.

Researchers have also revealed that dogs can sense stress in their owners and exhibit some of that stress themselves. The research found that a dog's cortisol levels can sync with their owners when they share an emotional bond developed through positive experiences together. But not to worry, you're not harming your Newf if you're bringing stress home from the office or are anxious about COVID-19. In fact, both you and your Newf are social supports for each other in stressful times.

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## Who's at TNP?

**Azi** arrived at TNP September 5 due to some issues she was having with the older female Newf in the house. She is 4 years old.

This petite girl is very friendly and gentle. She will be evaluated this month for discharge from her eye, then a plan will be developed to get her ready for her new home.



**Peaches** made it to TNP on September 19 after an overnight journey from Wisconsin with the help of volunteer transporters.

Peaches had ACL surgery on both legs in March and April with financial assistance from the Newfoundland Club of America Charitable Trust from the Barrister Fund Grant Program, TNP, individual donations, and West Suburban Animal Hospital in Toledo, OH, who offered a generous discount. Her story was followed on the TNP Facebook page. She has made a wonderful recovery.



Peaches has been lovingly cared for by her owners but, due to hardship has been surrendered to TNP.

After vetting, TNP will determine the best home for this sweet girl. Peaches is 3 years old.

## Expert Excerpts

*With Dr. Lauren Flanagan of  
Pepperell (MA) Veterinary Hospital*

### *Clinical signs of SAS and treatment*

Subaortic stenosis (SAS) is a developmental defect in the left side of the heart blocking the flow of blood from the left ventricle into the aorta, the main artery that brings blood to the rest of the body. Sadly, Newfoundlands have the highest risk for SAS.

Clinical signs of SAS are variable based on severity. Mildly affected dogs may have no clinical signs at all but your veterinarian may hear an abnormal sound (heart murmur) that may be suggestive of SAS. More severely affected dogs may be lethargic and exercise intolerant. Some patients have fainting episodes. Congestive heart failure and sudden death are also possible with SAS. Definitive diagnosis is made by an ultrasound of the heart, called an echocardiogram.

There is no specific treatment for SAS. Surgical dilation of the valve via open heart surgery has not shown any significant survival benefits so it is generally not recommended. Exercise restriction is strongly recommended as the risk of sudden death increases with activity and excitement. Beta blockers are often used with SAS. These are drugs that will slow the heart rate. They do appear to prolong survival but recent studies are questioning their efficacy. All pet parents of an SAS patient should plan on a yearly echocardiogram to monitor for progression of the disease. In the case of the Newfie, the old adage 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure' stands true. We know SAS is inherited as a dominant trait in the breed so affected dogs should not be bred. All potential breeding dogs should be screened by a cardiologist before breeding. Responsible breeding can help eliminate the disease and also save future Newfie owners the heartbreak of losing a furry family member from SAS.

## TNP Alumni

by Judy Chronopoulos

I had lost my first Newf, Keyush to cancer and cried daily. I found That Newfoundland Place on my search for a rescued Newf. I knew my heart was breaking and I wanted to rescue, but I wanted a Newfoundland. Lucky me, I found TNP and Cathy.

TNP did a thorough background check on me, which I was happy to give. I owned a St. Bernard, Jake, and he loved his sister, Keyush. So it was important to me to find him a match. Cathy did just that. She matched Izzy to me and my husband, and Jake. We're from Long Island originally and that's where we were living at the time. We drove to CT when Cathy called to tell us she thought she had the perfect match. On the way to CT we knew we were going to love her.

When we arrived at TNP, we met Cathy and fell in love with TNP. She does amazing things. It was great to see her home and what she does for these dogs. The land and setup she has for rescues is nothing short of amazing. Izzy was perfect. We decided to take her home that day.

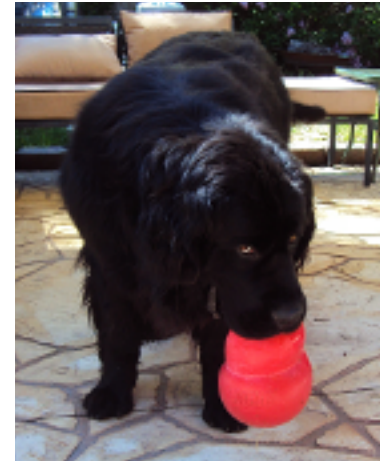
On our way home, we made a bathroom stop. I went to the ladies' room and my husband took Izzy for a walk. That started their love affair! Izzy loved Daddy and was Daddy's girl from that day. When we got her home, the first few weeks she gave us her worst, as if daring us to keep her. I would just hug her and tell her we loved her and she was staying. It was about 3 weeks to a month in that she walked in to the living room one night and climbed up on the couch. At that exact moment I knew she felt as if she was home. She was our girl. But she loved her Daddy, she would tolerate me.



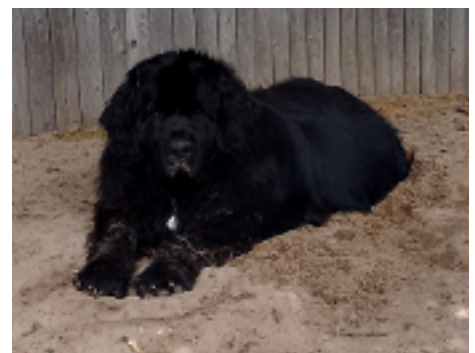
When Daddy went to work, she would wait by the front door for him to get home. Her little face would light up when he pulled up. Jake loved her and we rescued a puppy, Floyd about 6 months later. Izzy raised Floyd as if he was her own. Floyd is half Newfie, half Cane Corso. Jake passed about a year after, at age 13. Izzy and Floyd remained bonded. Two years after that we rescued Jovi, and Izzy was a natural mom again.

We moved to Georgia when Izzy was 7. She suffered bloat at age 8, but we caught it and she made it through. My husband got cancer and Izzy nursed him through his treatments, always by his side. I just loved my girl.

Izzy suffered an enlarged heart after her 9th birthday. We made the decision to let her go. I'm writing this through tears. I'm not sure we'll ever get another Izzy, but I'd love to rescue another girl. I know that's what she'd want. Cathy is an amazing woman and has a fantastic rescue. You were a godsend Cathy. Thank you for my girl.



Izzy and her beloved Kong toy. Judy placed Izzy's ashes in it.



## **Symptoms of stress in dogs**

How do you know if your dog is stressed? It may be fairly obvious if he/she shows symptoms during an event such as a thunderstorm or Fourth of July and can include:

- pacing
- shaking
- panting
- restlessness
- barking or whining
- drooling or licking
- increased shedding
- aggression/destructive behavior
- urinating/defecating inside
- bodily changes (ears, eyes, tail, posture)
- avoidance
- hiding or escaping behavior

## **Handling Stress**

If your Newf is stressed, first remove him or her from the stressor, if possible. Remain calm and sit quietly with the dog. Try not to be overly comforting as this will confirm that his or her fears are justified and may decrease confidence in the future. Providing distractions and routine can be helpful such as commands of sit and down.



Just like for humans, exercise is a great stress reliever, whether it's a walk or a game of fetch. The release of endorphins from physical activity is good for you and your dog. Your touch is also likely very soothing to your Newf – as most of them crave attention – so petting may quickly put him or her at ease.

Other methods of stress relief for your dog include massage, music therapy, a dedicated safe space of their own (many dogs enjoy their crate in stressful times), or pressure vests. Natural supplements that contain melatonin, thiamin, chamomile, L-Theanine or L-tryptophan may be helpful and aromatherapy has been effective for some dogs.

Behavior training may be a good option to address the anxiety. Counterconditioning is meant to change your Newf's response to the stimuli responsible for anxiety, by replacing the unwanted behavior with a more desirable behavior, like sitting or focusing on you. Desensitization allows your dog to gradually overcome anxiety by slowly introducing him or her to the stimuli of anxiety, and gradually increasing intensity. Repeated exposure and rewarding positive behavior can be very beneficial in managing anxiety.

If you notice your dog becomes consistently anxious or is not able to be comforted easily, consult your veterinarian to rule out an underlying medical condition. Your vet may recommend prescription medications such as antidepressants to help your Newf cope with event-related stress such as thunderstorms or car rides.

We can't eliminate stress from our or our Newf's lives, nor should we. Dealing with stress allows both species to build confidence in their abilities to face new stimuli and situations. But both you and your Newf can work to reduce stress and live more calmly together.

There are many resources that provide more in depth information on stress in dogs, including:

<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/health/treating-dog-anxiety/>

<https://www.healthline.com/health-news/dogs-mirror-owners-stress#The-bottom-line>

<https://vcahospitals.com/know-your-pet/signs-your-dog-is-stressed-and-how-to-relieve-it>

<https://www.ccsPCA.com/blog-spca/education/anxious-dog/>

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/many-dogs-are-prone-to-anxiety-study-finds#Breed-specific-differences>

## Using Science to Reduce Stress

Stress in dogs begins in the brain, just as it does with humans. By studying genetics, scientists can examine what happens in the brain and develop ways to help reduce stress in our furry friends.



Jessica Hekman, DVM, PhD works at the Broad Institute of MIT/Harvard on Darwin's Ark project ([darwinsark.org](http://darwinsark.org)), which uses genetics and behavior to advance the understanding of complex diseases. (Darwin's Ark uses everyday pets as subjects and you can register your dog to be a participant and fill out a survey. No visit required.)

Using saliva samples, Jessica identifies genetic markers associated with stress, for example, the markers associated in dogs who have a thunderstorm phobia compared to a dog who does not. Jessica said her long-term goal is to "use our findings to help breeders select dogs with greater or lesser risk of the behavior they want to breed for – so that we can help breeders breed dogs who are more resilient to stress." This would help the dogs, as they would experience less anxiety, and pet owners would worry less about having a stressed pet.

### What happens when a dog is stressed?

According to Jessica, a dog experiences stress when "the brain perceives something and decides it's a bad thing. The brain sends a signal to the rest of the body - through hormones - that something

## Upcoming Events

### All TNP events for 2020 canceled

All remaining That Newfoundland Place events for 2020, including the Annual Reunion and Fundraiser have been canceled due to safety concerns around COVID-19.

Rescue work continues - both intake and placement - and TNP has been helping pet owners with food donations as the need arises. If you would like to give a gift, visit the [TNP website](#). Thank you.

is bad and to prepare for the bad thing by shifting the body's energy away from things like digestion and to things like activating muscles for running away." Once the brain stops sending these signals, the hormones dissipate after about an hour.

Socialization and genetics determine what the brain perceives. "Through socialization the dog can be taught the world is a safe place and reduce some of the perceived stress," Jessica said. By understanding socialization and genetics, researchers and pet owners can create a calmer world for their Newfs – and themselves.

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