

TACKLING THUNDERSTORM PHOBIA

WITH SOMETHING NEW!



Thomas Barker, British, 1769 - 1847, Shepherd Boys and Dog Sheltering from a Storm, c. 1789/1790.

Suzanne Stack, DVM

Tom Critzer, an electrical engineer in Ohio has patented a "Storm Defender" cape (www.stormdefender.com) for thunderstorm phobic dogs. The "cape" is a lightweight dog coat that is metallic on the inside. It discharges the dog's fur so that thunderstorms are no longer a "hair raising" experience. You can read about the role of static charge in thunderstorm phobia in Dr. Nicholas Dodman's **Dogs Behaving Badly**. After wearing the cape a time or two, the dog learns that rain, thunder, lightning, and changes in barometric pressure are no longer associated with scary events such as a tree falling on the neighbor's house - or worse.

The inventor hand wrote me a note (10/03), saying that he is up to 200 capes sold with only one failure. The cape is for indoor use only and should be put on at the first sign of agitation. There is a bit of a learning curve involved, so the dog is not to be drugged, even with herbs, while wearing the cape - a drugged dog can't learn. Most dogs just lay down once the cape is put on and some will even come looking for their owners to put their cape on when they feel the "bad vibes." Mr. Critzer recommends to just put the cape on and leave it at that, do not reward the dog for inappropriate attention seeking. The capes are \$65 and he guarantees your money back if it does not work after three good thunderstorms. If you buy one, please fill out and return his feedback form so that he knows how it's working for you.

Fortunately or unfortunately, thunderstorm season in Arizona is over for the year so my Gumby won't get to try his out until next summer. It did, however, work as advertised during a "solar flare" (an electrical atmospheric event) on October 29. Those lacking internet access may send inquiries to T.F. Critzer, P.O. Box 18598, Fairfield, Ohio 45018-0598.