

## Through a Dog's Ear: How to Use Sound to Improve the Health & Behavior of Your Canine Companion

**Joshua Leeds**

**Susan Wagner**

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More than 10 million dogs are estimated to have separation anxiety, and up to 90% of dog owners discuss behavioral issues with their vets. According to authors Leeds and Wagner, relief for both canine and human could be just a boombox away.

Leeds is a researcher and music producer studying psychoacoustics, the effect of sound on the human nervous system. He has produced many CDs aimed at relaxation, healing, and concentration and his books include *The Power of Sound* and *Sonic Alchemy*. Wagner is a veterinary neurologist with an interest in the health effects of the human—animal bond. Together they present a book and CD based on scientific research into the physiological changes that occur in both humans and canines when they hear certain sounds.

The human heart averages sixty beats per minute, and the most relaxing music matches that rhythm. Even though dogs' heartbeats vary widely according to their size, they find the same rhythms relaxing. Simple arrangements are also much easier for the brain to process than more complex sounds, and Leeds rearranged classical pieces to fit these criteria. In clinical trials lead by Wagner, 70% of dogs in kennels and 85% of dogs in households were relaxed by the psychoacoustic arrangements, with more than half so relaxed they fell asleep.

The included CD contains selections from two of Leeds' music series: *Music to Calm Your Canine Companion* and *Music for the Canine Household*. The first is aimed at total relaxation and is recommended for treating behavioral issues caused by anxiety, such as those that occur during thunderstorms or when strangers visit the house. The second is more upbeat music that has a general calming affect on dogs without putting their human housemates to sleep. Leeds and Wagner recommend listening to the CD as stressful situations occur or for an hour at a time two or three times a day, although there is no reason it couldn't be played all day. "Concern for harm is unnecessary as long as no one eats the CD."

The conversational tone of the writing makes this book accessible to a wide range of readers. It will interest pet owners, science students, and those looking to improve their own health as well as their dog's. With 60—90% of human illnesses being stress related, a little calming music could go a long way toward improving the health of every member of a household.

CHRISTINE CANFIELD (February 14, 2008)

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