

# Calming Shelter Animals Through Music

By Pamela Fisher, DVM

**B**arking, meowing, whining, pacing, panting, shaking and hiding.... These behaviors are all too common in animal shelters across the country. However, an increasing number of shelters house animals who are calm, restful, content and even purring. What's the difference? The relaxed animals are part of the Rescue Animal Mp3 Project. The Rescue Animal Mp3 Project is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization founded by North Canton, Ohio, veterinarian Pamela Fisher, DVM. Its mission is to provide free-of-charge, calming music via Mp3 players pre-loaded with 30 hours of music, to government animal shelters and non-profit rescue facilities across the United States. Clinical studies<sup>1,2,3</sup> have documented that specific music vibrations, sounds and tempos can generate a calming effect on animals. Dr. Fisher has repeatedly observed positive relaxation responses to this gentle music in both her veterinary practice and area shelters where she has installed

the music. As you are well aware, animals who are calm and friendly have a much higher potential to be adopted than animals who are stressed and agitated. This music can improve the well-being of animals in your facility, and it is soothing to staff and visitors alike.

Rescue Animal Mp3 Project has compiled a large variety of copyrighted music, generously donated for their use in animal shelters, and downloaded it on to Mp3 players. These Mp3 players are a convenient way to incorporate music in your facility and can be played throughout the day. A timer (included) plugged into your speaker system can automatically turn the music off at night and back on in the morning, which helps improve the calming effect and allows the animals to have some quiet time. Your shelter will need a simple sound system (for multiple rooms) or an Mp3 Speaker, boom box



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or CD type player (for one open room) with an aux input to plug in the Mp3 player. Visit [rescueanimalmp3.org/FAQs.html](http://rescueanimalmp3.org/FAQs.html) to find speaker suggestions and answers to your questions. Also refer to RescueAnimalMp3.org for a simple installation instructions video.

Thank you for considering our Rescue Animal Mp3 Project. Our mission is to provide calming music to the animals in shelters so they will be more relaxed and inviting of loving adoptions. I look forward to working together with you on this heartfelt project. Your participation and insights will assist the Rescue Animal Mp3 Project to expand and provide music to shelters and rescues across the U.S. Your permission to allow us to list your shelter information and links on the RescueAnimalMp3.org Web site will increase the awareness and exposure of your caring facility and your special pets in need of adoption.

Visit [www.RescueAnimalMp3.org](http://www.RescueAnimalMp3.org) to learn more about this project and apply for a free Mp3 music loaded player for your shelter or rescue facility. For additional information, contact [info@RescueAnimalMp3.org](mailto:info@RescueAnimalMp3.org) or call 330-266-2500. Won't you please become a part of this project, and let this program help your animals?

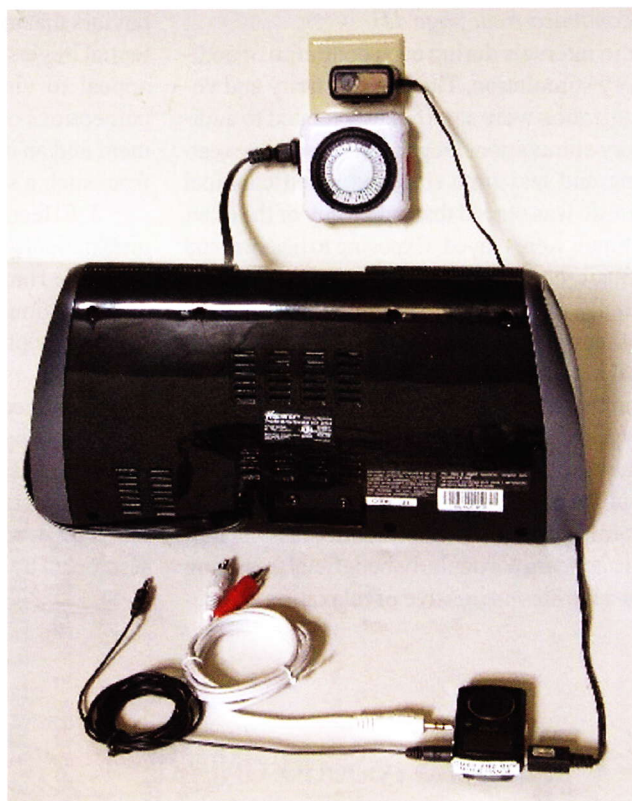
We look forward to hearing from you and hope you will become a member of this growing group whose goal is to improve the lives of all shelter animals.

1. *The influence of auditory stimulation on the behaviour of dogs housed in a rescue shelter.*

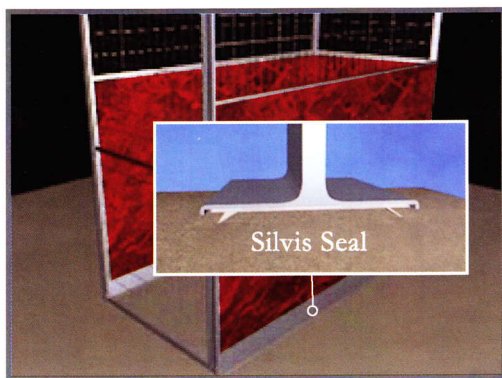
Authors: Wells, D.L.; Graham, L.; Hepper, PG

Source: *Animal Welfare*, Volume 11, Number 4, November 2002, pp. 385-393(9). This study explored the influence of five types of auditory stimulation (human conversation, classical music, heavy metal music, pop music, and a control) on the behavior of 50 dogs housed in a rescue shelter. The dogs were exposed to each type of auditory stimulation for 4 h, with an intervening period of one day between conditions. The dogs' position in their kennels (front, back), their ac-

tivity (moving, standing, sitting, resting, sleeping), and their vocalization (barking, quiet, other) were recorded over 4 h at 10  
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min intervals during each condition of auditory stimulation. The dogs' activity and vocalization were significantly related to auditory stimulation. Dogs spent more time resting and less time standing when classical music was played than when any of the other stimuli were played. Exposure to heavy metal music encouraged dogs to spend significantly more of their time barking than did other types of auditory stimulation. Classical music resulted in dogs spending significantly more of their time quiet than did other types of auditory stimulation. It is suggested that the welfare of sheltered dogs may be enhanced through exposure to appropriate forms of auditory stimulation. Classical music appears particularly beneficial, resulting in activities suggestive of relaxation and be-

haviors that are considered desirable by potential buyers. This form of music may also appeal to visitors, resulting in enhanced perceptions of the rescue shelter's environment and an increased desire to adopt a dog from such a source.

2. Effects of harp music therapy on canine patients in the veterinary hospital setting. The Harp Therapy Journal, 8(2), 1, 4-5, 15. Boone, A., & Quelch, V. (2003) [Three groups of 32 canine patients received 60 minute sessions of harp therapy (Group 1: hospitalized less than 8 hrs.; Group 2: hospitalized longer than 8 hrs.; and Group 3: post-surgical patients). Visual measures of discomfort: restlessness, anxiety and respiration all decreased during the harp therapy session. The control group displayed no

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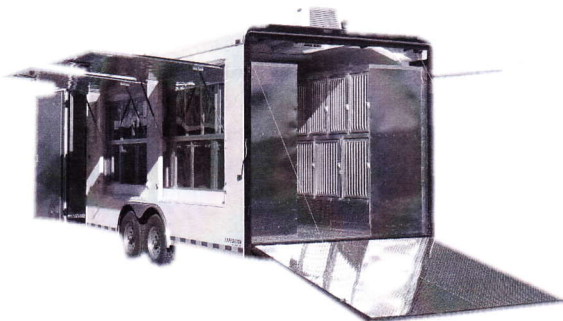
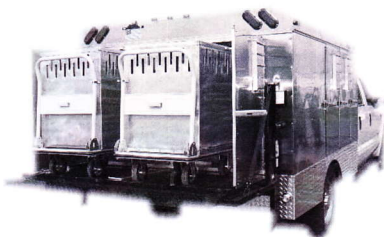
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such increase and, in fact, continued to increase in all three measures. The harp therapy group demonstrated a gradual decline in respiration rates over the on-hour in contrast to the control group – which remained unchanged during the same period. Both groups demonstrated a shallow trend in reduction of heart rate.]

3. The effects of sound and music on our patients and workplace (Proceedings) <http://veterinarycalendar.dvm360.com>, April 1, 2010 By: Susan O. Wagner, DVM, MS,

DACVIM.

Sound is an important part of an animal's surroundings and should be considered when taking a history on an anxious or reactive pet. Many owners don't realize the significance of sound in their homes, and most veterinarians are not cognizant of the sonic environment their hospitalized patients are exposed to.

*Dr. Fisher has a holistic outpatient veterinary practice in North Canton, Ohio. Her dream of helping the homeless animals*

*in shelters by providing calming music has become a reality with the formation of the Rescue Animal Mp3 Project. This project is her way of reaching out and helping more animals than only the pets she's privileged to work with in her office. She can be reached at: [info@RescueAnimalMp3.org](mailto:info@RescueAnimalMp3.org). 7211 Wales Avenue NW, North Canton, OH 44720. Phone: 330-266-2500 / fax 330-266-2501. [www.RescueAnimalMp3.org](http://www.RescueAnimalMp3.org). Follow the project on Facebook!*

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