

# Does Your Pet Get the Zoomies at Night? Their Meridian Clock Might Be Off

If your pet is hyperactive at night, it could mean that their internal clock is misaligned. Here's what you can do to solve this issue and bring your pet back on schedule.

Reviewed by [Dr. Tracy Duffner](#)

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Sudden bursts of nighttime energy in pets could indicate a misalignment in their biological rhythms, particularly during the hours meant for rest and recovery
- Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) identifies a 24-hour energy cycle through which the organ systems move. Aligning feeding, activity, and rest with this rhythm supports optimal health
- Pets digest and absorb nutrients best between 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. when the first the stomach meridian peaks and then the spleen meridian peaks, helping prevent bloating, fatigue, and late-day energy spikes
- Physical and mental stimulation between 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. matches peak energy in the small intestine and bladder meridians, reducing the likelihood of nighttime restlessness
- Using time-restricted feeding, natural light exposure, and calm evening routines can realign your pet's internal clock and reduce behaviors like evening hyperactivity

Many pet owners are familiar with the burst of energy some dogs or cats experience during the evening, commonly known as "the zoomies." While often considered amusing or harmless, this behavior may actually be a sign that your pet's internal rhythm is out of sync.

Like people, animals energetically follow natural daily cycles that govern activity, eating, resting, and recovery. These cycles, described in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) as the Meridian Clock, and in modern science as circadian rhythms, are foundational to health.<sup>1</sup>

When a pet's schedule conflicts with their internal clock, they may show signs of stress, poor sleep, digestive issues, or those untimely bursts of energy just as you are settling down for the night. By aligning your pet's care routine with their natural biological timing, you can help prevent these behaviors and support better overall health.

## Circadian Rhythms — The Science Behind the Clock

Modern veterinary research confirms what traditional medicine has long taught — Animals, like humans, have built-in clocks that guide physiological processes. These circadian rhythms regulate everything from digestion and hormone production to sleep quality and immune system health.<sup>2</sup>

When these rhythms are disrupted — by irregular routines, artificial lighting at night, or constant feeding — pets may exhibit symptoms such as:

- Difficulty settling at night
- Irregular bathroom habits
- Poor appetite or overeating
- Behavioral shifts such as anxiety or overexcitement

This scientific perspective helps explain why behaviors like evening zoomies may not simply be "random bursts of energy," but signs of a system struggling to regain balance.

## Understanding the Meridian Clock

The Meridian Clock is a 24-hour system that maps when energy flows most strongly through different meridians which are associated with the different organ systems. Each system has a two-hour window of peak activity, regulating various physiological and emotional functions. For instance:<sup>3</sup>

- The **stomach meridian** is at its peak during the hours of 7 a.m. to 9 a.m., meaning this is the best time for feeding.
- The **spleen meridian** peaks just after the stomach during the hours of 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., and this is the best time for digestion and nutrient absorption.
- 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. is the peak **small intestine meridian** time, and is best for play, training, and digestion.
- The **kidney meridian** peak is at 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., and is the ideal time for rest and recovery, while the **pericardium meridian** peaks at 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., which is best for calming interactions like cuddling or petting.

If your pet frequently becomes overly active during the evening — say, around 9 p.m., when their energy should be shifting toward rest — it may be a sign that their kidney and pericardium meridians are not functioning optimally. This misalignment can manifest as restlessness, anxious behavior, or those classic nighttime zoomies.

## Feeding Your Pet on Time Is a Key Factor to Stability

Feeding your pet at the right time is one of the most effective ways to support their internal rhythm. As mentioned, the stomach meridian is strongest in the early morning, so providing your pet's main meal during this window allows for:

- Better digestion and nutrient absorption
- More stable energy throughout the day
- Fewer cravings or scavenging behaviors

However, if you offer your pet irregular feedings, late-night snacks, or all-day grazing, it can cause a disruption in your pet's energy flow, leading to nighttime hyperactivity. If your pet receives their largest meal late in the day, it can cause excess energy to emerge at night — right when you and your pet should be winding down for the night.

## Schedule Fun Activities in the Afternoon

Another key strategy to reduce evening zoomies is to time your pet's physical and mental activities during their natural energy peaks. Between 1 and 5 PM, the small intestine and bladder meridians are at their peak, making it the ideal time for play sessions, training or agility exercises, outdoor walks, and interactive enrichment activities.

By engaging your pet during this time, you support their metabolism, help maintain their muscle tone, and utilize their energy stores. Using the energy stores at this time can help prevent zoomies later.

## Evening Is for Winding Down

From 5 p.m. to 11 p.m., the kidney, pericardium, and triple heater (a network that regulates and coordinates different body processes such as hormones and fluid balance) meridians are active, and are focused on restoring energy, calming the nervous system, and prepping the body for sleep. During this time, you must focus on relaxation, rejuvenation, and recovery.

A pet whose internal rhythm is properly aligned will naturally begin to relax during this period. However, if evening routines include stimulating activities — like rough play, loud environments, or late feeding — it disrupts this natural process and triggers hyperactivity. If your pet regularly gets the zoomies in the evening, try:

- Avoiding high-energy play after 6 p.m.
- Dimming your lights in the evening and turning off screens
- Offering quiet bonding time like brushing or petting
- Maintaining a consistent bedtime

## Try These Science-Based, Time-Tested Solutions

To help your pet maintain balance and avoid issues like nighttime zoomies, you can apply practical strategies rooted in both Traditional Chinese Medicine and modern circadian science. These time-tested approaches support your pet's natural rhythms and promote long-term health in simple, manageable ways.

- **Practice time-restricted feeding** — Consider limiting your pet's food intake to a defined window during daylight hours to reinforce your pet's internal schedule. For example, feeding breakfast by 9 a.m. and dinner no later than 5 p.m. aligns with digestive peaks and prevents nighttime energy surges. This will also help reduce the risk of obesity, diabetes, and inflammation.
- **Expose your pet to natural daylight** — Make sure to expose your pet to natural light during daytime and dim light in the evening to regulate the hormone melatonin, which is essential for sleep and immune function. Excessive artificial light in the evening, especially blue light, can confuse the brain and delay sleep readiness.
- **Consider keeping a pet journal** — Tracking your pet's activities hourly every day allows you to identify patterns and identify possible chronic problems.<sup>4</sup>
- **Structure your pet's daily routines** — Maintaining fixed times for meals, play, and rest help keep your pet's internal clocks aligned. This helps prevent energy spikes at inappropriate times.

# Help Your Pet Stay on Time and Minimize Nighttime Chaos

If your dog or cat regularly gets the zoomies at night, their Meridian Clock may indeed be out of alignment. This behavior is not simply quirky; it may reflect a deeper imbalance in their natural rhythm.

By aligning your pet’s care with both traditional wisdom and modern circadian science, you can help promote better sleep, reduce anxiety, improve digestion, and support overall health. With awareness, structure, and a touch of intuition, you can create a daily routine that supports your pet’s natural biology — and brings more peace to your evenings.

## Sources and References

<sup>1,3</sup> [Poll to Pastern Holistics, May 21, 2025](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Journal Of Biological Rhythms, Volume 39 No. 3, June 2024 237–269](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Animals Body Mind Spirit, Circadian Clock](#)

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