

Firework Fear

Fireworks are enjoyed year round for people but can be a source of fear for many animals. This can be made less frightening for your pet if you follow some top tips:

Pets will be aware of the colder longer nights of autumn and potentially may become in a heightened state of anxiety prior to the first fireworks even being lit.

Plan ahead

- Using pheromone diffusers that disperse calming chemicals into the room can be a good idea for your cat or dog.

Feliway® - cat pheromone which plugs into the wall socket and lasts for 28 days
Adaptil® - dog pheromone which is available as a plug in or a collar which last for 28 days. Sprays are also available to put on bedding or cloth in the pets normal sleeping area.



- Provide your dog with a safe haven, a quiet hide away where they can go if scared. Train your dog to associate this with positive experiences E.g. by leaving toys there, but do not impose yourself at any time. Swap the toys regularly so that the dog realises this is a safe enjoyable place to be. It is important that the dog has access to its safe haven at all times even when you are not home, helping it to cope.
- Medications – there are medications available from your veterinary practice that can help reduce anxiety and can be used to help these pets.
- **Sounds Scary- for dogs**
In the long term your dog needs to be less afraid of loud noises. This is possible to achieve with appropriate behavioural advice and lots of patience! “Sounds Scary®” is an easy to follow CD therapy pack for dogs, which can be useful but therapy needs to be started in spring ideally to give time for the dog to become de-sensitised to the fear of fireworks. It required commitment for the owner not to rush the pet too quickly but can offer a huge improvement in the quality of life of a dog showing noise phobias.

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- Some owners have reported some success in using the ‘Thunder Jacket®’ on their dogs.

Keep Secure

- Make sure the dog or cat always has somewhere to hide, even under a bed/furniture.
- Walk dogs in daylight hours and keep cats and dogs indoors when fireworks are likely to be let off.
- In evening close the windows, draw the curtains to prevent extra problems caused by the flashing lights and put on music or turn on the TV to mask or muffle the sound of fireworks.
- Try to ignore your pet if it is scared and leave them alone unless they are likely to harm themselves. Unnecessary petting or comforting behaviour towards your pet (although difficult not to do) will only make its fear worse in the long run. Your pet will believe that if you have to reassure it then something really frightening must be happening outside- carry on as normal as much as possible!
- Never punish your pet when it is scared as this will make things worse.
- Ignore the fireworks and play with a toy to see if your dog wants to join in, but don't force them to play.
- If you know a dog that isn't scared by noises which gets on well with your dog then keeping the two together during the evenings may help your dog to realise that there is no need to be afraid.

Don't Forget Small Animals

If your pets live outside, provide lots of bedding so that your pet can burrow in, and partly cover cages with blankets.

