

Preparing for Fireworks Night

Fireworks can be a source of fear for many animals. It doesn't have to be that way though, so don't ignore the problem. Follow our top tips from our clinical behaviourist Jon Bowen to make firework celebrations less frightening for your pet.

If you can make some simple preparations in advance of the firework season, you will find it much easier to keep your pet relaxed and safe.

 Find out the date, time and likely duration of any local public firework displays. This is particularly important if you have moved house recently. Consider collecting information about local firework events for your veterinary surgeon to display on the waiting room notice board. If your pet is afraid of fireworks, try to stay at home with them on any night when you know that there will be a public display nearby.

 Contact your vet to arrange any drugs or pheromone products that might help reduce your pet's stress and anxiety during firework events. There are many available products, but you should only use those which have been thoroughly tested and proven to be safe and effective in dogs and cats.

 Prepare a den area for your pet, so that they have somewhere to go to feel safe when there are loud noises. Many pets will go to hide in a corner, behind the sofa or under a bed when they hear fireworks. This ability to hide is very important, because it gives your animal a sense of control and safety. You should try to make this den as comforting and secure as possible for your pet. More information about creating a den is on page two.

On the day of a firework display:

 Keep your pet in a safe and secure environment at all times so that they cannot escape if there is a sudden noise. Make sure that gates, fences and doors are secure.

 Take your dog out to the toilet before the fireworks are likely to start and give them a carbohydrate-rich meal in the late afternoon. Mix mashed potato or overcooked rice with a small portion of their usual food. This will help to make them feel calm and sleepy as the night draws in.



 Don't get cross with your pet if they are scared, it will only make them more frightened. Don't try to soothe your pet either, because this will only confirm their fears and reward nervous behaviour.

 Be a good role model; ignore the noises and act as though nothing frightening is happening. Try to appear happy and unconcerned. It can help if you quietly play a game with another pet in the household, because the frightened one may be tempted to relax and join in.

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Don't forget small animals!

Rabbits, guinea pigs, birds and other small animals may also be disturbed by the loud noise and bright lights of fireworks. Don't forget to keep them safe and happy too!

 If your pets live outside, partly cover cages, pens and aviaries with blankets so that one area is well sound-proofed. Make sure that your pet is still able to look out.

 Provide lots of extra bedding so your pet has something to burrow in.



Making a safe den for your pet (mostly applicable to dogs):

 Choose a place that your pet already goes to when there are loud noises.

 Put down a few blankets for your dog to rest on and hide under.

 Include an old, unwashed piece of clothing like a woolly jumper so that your dog can smell your scent and feel comforted by your presence.

 Keep windows and curtains closed in this room, to minimise incoming noise and flashing lights.

 Leave a water bowl nearby so that your dog can easily get a drink.

 If you find your dog resting in the den area when there are no loud noises, show some praise and attention, and give a food treat.

 Regularly take your dog to the den and give him a few treats or a chew.

 Consider installing an Adaptil (DAP) diffuser close to the den area, as this releases a maternal pheromone that reduces stress in dogs. The diffuser should be installed a few days ahead of fireworks, and be left switched on at all times.

 Make sure that the den area is available for your dog at all times, even when you are not at home.

