

How to Help Your Pet Survive Fireworks

- ✿ Think ahead. Prevention is easier than cure. Arrange to take your pet away from the area for the evening if a fireworks party is expected.
- ✿ Keep cats indoors. If they hate sudden bangs and whistles, most will safely hide themselves away.
- ✿ Consider stabling your horse overnight.
- ✿ Bring rabbits in outdoor hutches into a shed or garage for the night, or else cover their hutch with thick blankets or some other insulating type materials to block out noises.

Preparations in Advance

- ✿ Ensure windows have heavy curtains, or you could use blankets draped across, to shut out flashing lights and block out noise.
- ✿ Make a “den” for your dog, perhaps under the stairs or under a table, with heavy blankets draped around it and preferably away from windows and outside walls.
- ✿ Make this den a fun place to be, ie: ask your dog to go there for cuddles or food or before going for a walk. Have lots of blankets, an old duvet or an eiderdown for digging and burrowing in. Each day place an old, unwashed item of your clothing in there to act as a comforter. Encourage your dog to use this den regularly.
- ✿ Place special treats, biscuits, safe bones or chews in this den. It is not unusual for dogs frightened of noises not to eat, but the presence of food is comforting.
- ✿ Have a water bowl in the den. Agitated dogs pant and so become thirsty.
- ✿ Two weeks before an anticipated fireworks party, plug in a DAP Diffuser close to, or ideally inside, the den. This helps a dog feel relaxed and comforted. A Feliway Diffuser or room spray will help your cat if it has a favourite room to hide away in. [Both are available from Reception.]
- ✿ Some dogs will tolerate ear plugs. Pieces of foam or cotton wool can be used, but ensure you remove these after use. Practice using these as they must not be so thin that they fall out, nor so thick that you need to force them in, thereby hurting your dog.
- ✿ Allow access to the den at all times.

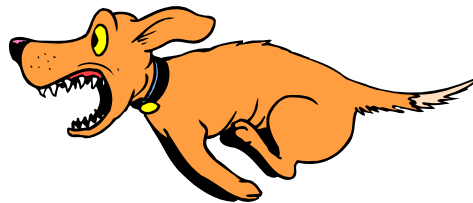
✿ Medication in certain situations **may** help:

- ~ Alternative therapies, such as Bach's Rescue Remedy (available from health shops and pharmacists), starting two weeks prior, or Skullcap and Valerian (available from Reception) helps certain pets. Alternative therapies all have side effects.
- ~ ACP (acepromazine) is a sedative often used. However, it is not really suitable, although many owners think that it is. Whilst it prevents a dog rushing out, it has very little anti-anxiety (anxiolytic) properties and so the result is that a dog is still terrified by noises, but unable to escape or engage in any “coping” behaviours. It also seems to actually enhance the noises heard, yet the dog cannot show how distressed it really is and also will become more frightened on every further occasion.
- ~ Another drug which is used is diazepam. It has both sedative and anxiolytic properties, but is very variable in its response in individuals, especially in dogs prone to aggressive outbursts. It does, however block short term memory so a dog will not learn to become more fearful on future occasions.

Therefore, any drug used must be tested well in advance of the occasion it is needed for. Skullcap and Valerian, ACP and diazepam are unsuitable for prolonged use. Due to the age, breed and history of a dog, these drugs may actually be contra-indicated. These are prescription only drugs and so can only be given by your veterinary surgeon.

Preparation on the Day

- ✧ Ensure that your dog has had a walk for toileting purposes [on the lead in case early fireworks are being let off].
- ✧ Give a large, stodgy, carbohydrate rich meal, eg: pasta, rice, mashed potato. This helps a pet feel sleepy and calmer.
- ✧ Play music with a definite beat, loud but comfortable.
- ✧ Check the DAP Diffuser is on (continue to use it for a week after the event).
- ✧ Check an article of your clothing is in your dog's den.
- ✧ Encourage your dog to be in his den.
- ✧ If your dog appears frightened, **do not** cuddle or talk soothingly to him. Equally, do not get cross with him. Your dog must not think that you are the only one to help him when frightened as you are not always going to be there.
- ✧ Try and totally ignore your dog if he becomes anxious. Even looking at your dog is rewarding him, so why not read the paper instead.
- ✧ The presence of a dog unafraid of loud noises often will help your dog.
- ✧ Act in a happy, upbeat manner to show your dog that you are not scared.
- ✧ If your dog is only slightly agitated, try and get him to play games or play hide 'n' seek with some favourite special titbits, or give him a fresh, safe bone to chew on.
- ✧ Insert ear plugs if your dog will tolerate these.
- ✧ Start medication, if being used, in advance of the expected fireworks.
- ✧ Consider long term behavioural therapy to overcome the problem in future years.



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