

Fireworks

Bonfire night can be a stressful time for our pets, and many owners contact us for advice in the lead up to the day. With November only a few weeks away, we have comprised some advice to help keep your pets as stress free as possible, but remember that fireworks are likely to start early!

- Make sure your pet has a safe space to retreat to – a crate is ideal if they are already crate trained. Be guided by your pet – if they favour a certain area such as underneath the dining table, then don't force them to move from there. You can keep bedding, treats and toys by this area.
- Drawing the curtains and turning the volume up on the radio or TV can help disguise the sights and sounds of fireworks
- Try to distract your pet by playing with them or doing 'fun' activities e.g. training and tricks, whilst ensuring there is plenty of loud background noise (such as TV or radio) at the same time. Pets can gradually overcome a fear of fireworks, but respond much better to distraction techniques long-term than constant physical attention, which can act to reinforce their fear.
- Use of pheromone products such as Adaptil and Feliway or calming supplements such as Zylkene can help take the edge off of any anxiety during stressful times. **These products are much more effective if introduced several weeks before the event, ideally at least 3 weeks in advance of expected fireworks.**
- Keep cats indoors and ensure that dogs are walked before dark: animals spooked by fireworks are more likely to stray.
- Small animals such as rabbits and guinea-pigs are easily frightened – if possible, bring them indoors where the noise of the fireworks is muffled and provide plenty of bedding for them to hide inside.
- Firework parties can be particularly stressful and can bring other hazards such as debris from used fireworks, which can cause damage if ingested – ensure that the garden is clear of any debris before allowing your pet to play outside.
- Sedation can be considered as a last resort for pets who become extremely stressed during firework season. This should be discussed in-depth with your vet, who will assess your pet and help you to decide if this is the most appropriate course of action for them. It is worth noting that in some cases, sedation can worsen a firework phobia.