

Pets are often scared of the bangs and flashes, but our firework survival guide will help you and your pet through the season and major events like Bonfire Night and New Year's Eve...

Small pets and fireworks

Rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, gerbils, mice, ferrets and birds all need to be treated with special care when fireworks are being let off. These animals are easily frightened. Here are some tips that may help.

- Hutches/cages and enclosures should, if possible, be brought into a quiet room indoors, or into a garage or shed.
- Give your pet extra bedding to burrow into so it feels safe.
- If you cannot bring your pet's hutch inside, you should turn its enclosure around so that it faces a wall or fence instead of the open garden.
- Cover any aviaries or hutches with thick blankets or a duvet to block out the sight of the fireworks and deaden the sound of the bangs, but make sure there is enough ventilation.
- If you have a house rabbit or you are able to bring your pet inside, draw the curtains or black out the windows to block out the flashes of light in the night sky.
- Close the windows to muffle the sound from outside. Switching the TV or radio on might help too, but make sure it's not too loud – especially if your rabbit isn't used to noises from the television.
- Rabbits are social animals so keep them with the companion they're familiar with to limit the stress of firework phobia.

Dogs, cats and fireworks

- Always keep dogs and cats inside when fireworks are being let off
- Make sure your dog is walked earlier in the day before the fireworks start
- Close all windows and doors and block off cat flaps to stop pets escaping and to keep noise to a minimum. Draw the curtains, and if the animals are used to the sounds of TV or radio, switch them on (but not too loudly) in order to block out some of the noise of the fireworks.
- Make sure your pet is microchipped and that the details are up to date, so that if they do run away, they have a better chance of being quickly reunited with you
- Prepare a 'den' for your pet where it can feel safe and comfortable – perhaps under a bed with some of your old clothes. They may like to hide there when the fireworks start.
- Let your pet pace around or hide in a corner if they want to. Do not try to coax them out- provide them somewhere to hide – it's just trying to find safety and should not be disturbed.



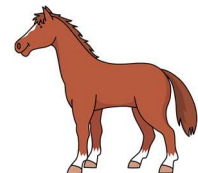
- Although it's difficult, when it's obvious your pets are stressed, try not to let them know you are worried as it may make the problem worse.
- Stay calm, act normally and give lots of praise for calm behaviour. It's OK to cuddle and stroke your pet if it helps them relax, but if they prefer to hide under your bed, then let them do this instead.
- Avoid leaving your pet alone during such potentially upsetting events. If you do have to leave the house, don't get angry with your pet if you find they have been destructive or toileted after being left on its own. Shouting at a frightened pet will only make them more stressed.
- Don't tie your dog up outside while fireworks are being let off, i.e. outside a shop while you pop inside, or leave them in the garden or in your car.
- Never take your dog to a fireworks display. Even if they don't bark or whimper at the noise, it doesn't mean they are happy. Excessive panting and yawning can indicate that your dog is stressed.
- Pheromone therapy e.g. Adaptil (dogs) or Feliway (cats) can be useful, as can herbal products e.g. pet remedy.

If you know your pet hates loud, high pitched or sudden noises, it's likely they will struggle to cope with the firework season.

Speak to us well in advance as we may be able prescribe calming medication that might help your dog if they really struggle over the period.

It's worth considering sound therapy, which slowly desensitizes your pet to the zips, whizzes and bangs of fireworks.

Ask your vet or a qualified behaviourist about this, but any training will have to start three to six months in advance of the firework season.



Horses, ponies and fireworks

- Fireworks must not be set off near livestock or horses in fields, or close to buildings housing livestock. Anyone planning a firework display in a rural area should warn neighbouring farmers in advance.
- Try to make sure that fireworks are never set off near your horse's field or stable. Tell neighbours and local fireworks display organisers there are horses nearby, so that they can ensure fireworks are set off in the opposite direction and well away from them.
- Keep your horse in a familiar environment, in their normal routine with any companions to make them feel secure. If your horse is usually stabled, then keep them stabled. If they are normally out in the field, keep them there as long as it is safe, secure and not near the fireworks display area.
- Ensure that you or someone experienced stays with your horse if you know fireworks are being set off. This way you can observe their behaviour, ensure they remains as safe and calm as possible and respond to its reactions appropriately.
- If you know your horse reacts badly to loud noises speak to us or perhaps consider moving your horse for the night

- Try to remain calm and positive as horses can sense unease in a person and this might make things worse if the horse is startled
- Be careful yourself. Try not to get in the way if your horse becomes startled as you may get hurt.
- Don't take the risk of riding when you think fireworks might be set off
- If it is necessary for you to leave your horse in the care of another person during a firework show, leave clear instructions and contact details for yourself and your vet should any problems arise

Think ahead



- We advise that all pet owners seek veterinary help for their animal six to 12 weeks before the firework season begins. Behavioural advice for your pet needs to be looked into three to six months in advance.
- Unfortunately, we are often not forewarned about private fireworks displays. Be prepared for 5 November and New Year's Eve and be proactive about finding out when other celebratory occasions might occur.

Contact the surgery during office hours if you have any concerns regarding fireworks and your pet.