

Fireworks & Dogs

Information & Advice

Every year many dogs (and other animals) will be affected as a direct result of fireworks, new fireworks legislation came into force in 2004 but for many the fireworks mayhem seems to start earlier and earlier each year, depending on where you live, with Nov. 5th as the 'main event' there are also other celebrations involving fireworks such as Diwali, Chinese New Year and increased popularity in some areas around Christmas and New Year.



For many of us, there isn't just one evening of fireworks, sounding like World War III, to cope with, but a whole run up and then follow on of weeks around it during which time many pets suffer.

Here we have collated some information regarding the safety of your dog, coping suggestions and current legislation.

Safety tips for your and your dog(s):

- ↪ Around this time there will be a steep increase in the number of stray dogs picked up and handed in, dogs which have become scared and bolted when out and off leash or having escaped from the home, here follows a few tips to help you and your dog:
- ↪ Please make sure your dog is wearing a secure collar with an ID disc firmly attached, a disc which has your current details on it, look at the tag now – can you actually read what it says?
- ↪ If your dog is ID Chipped – are your contact recorded details up to date?
- ↪ If your dog isn't ID chipped – please just get it done, it doesn't take 5 minutes and is relatively cheap-it will make all the difference should the worst happen and you lose your dog.
- ↪ Keep your dog inside the house with you during the worst times, check your garden fencing – is it secure? Does the gate(s) lock? A dog under stress can sometimes panic, so double check how safe the inside of your home is, e.g., ornaments, glass doors, open fires.
- ↪ Don't leave your dog out in the garden unattended, make sure your garden is super secure.
- ↪ Dogs who are known to have a problem with fireworks and are affected are best not left alone at home, as dogs are pack animals, stay with your pet and keep inside when the fireworks are being let off.
- ↪ Don't leave your dog tied up outside the shop or alone anywhere, e.g., in a vehicle, yobs throw fireworks at animals and find it amusing to wind them up, keep your dog safe.
- ↪ Never take your dog or any animal to a Firework display, it may be fun for you to watch but keep your dog away and safe.

Keep your dog leashed when out. If you use a flexi leash be extra careful, as your dog suddenly running full throttle to the end of it will cause a jolt which can pull the lead right out of your grasp-you end up with a dog running in a panic with the equipment bouncing along behind, the sudden bang of a rocket etc can cause the most laid back of dogs to bolt; before they know it they are lost.

Please check the following today:

Collar & ID Tag: Your dog needs to be wearing an ID tag or a collar with Identification clearly inscribed on it (this is a legal requirement) -check it can be read, that the information on it is up to date and is securely attached to your dogs collar.

Make sure your dogs collar is in good condition and fits properly.



Microchip Implant: Is your dog microchipped?

If not now would be a good time to get that done. It's a simple painless procedure that your vet can do. If your dog is already chipped make sure you have the number to call should the worst happen also make sure your contact details are up to date.

Bonfire night is coming and for many dogs it's terrifying. You may think your dog is bombproof but maybe, this time something will surprise him and he may bolt. If the details on his tag are wrong, or if in the panic he loses his collar, your chances of being reunited with your pet are greatly reduced.

Getting through it – some survival tips:

- Exercise your dog earlier; try to have him tired out ready for the evenings.
- Is the house secure-windows closed, cat flap locked (keep the cat safely inside as well), doors secured etc and both escape proof and safe should your dog panic?
- Draw the curtains/blinds to keep out visual reminders-flashing lights etc.
- Have some familiar calming music on or turn up the TV (not too loud) to help block out some of the noise.
- Make sure your dog has access to an area where he feels safe - a 'den' which is away from windows with his bedding and toys, put some of your clothing in here so there is a familiar comforting scent, don't move his bed suddenly, if you are going to set up a safe area in a specific part of the house, do it a few weeks in advance to give him time to adjust and familiarise himself.
- Let your dog out to relieve himself in the garden, under your supervision, so that he will be more comfortable and not desperate for a pee when the noise intensifies during the evenings.
- Offer a stuffed [Kong](#), toys and/or favourite chew toy to distract; giving him something to do can help relive stress.
- Make sure there is plenty of fresh drinking water available and feed your pet a couple of hours before the fireworks in the evening to help relax him.
- You could also try using a [DAP Diffuser](#)-leave it plugged in all day a couple of weeks in advance. Ask your vet for further information.



- Natural Remedies can also be useful for behavioural problems in dogs, try Dr Bach Rescue Remedy, for more info have a look in your local chemist or go to www.bachcentre.com

Another homeopathic remedy which can also help is called '[Anxiety](#)' from the Company of Animals Ltd; it is designed to promote a sense of calm.

Scullcap and Valerian tablets are a herbal combination which some dog owners use to bring relief to their dogs when anxious and nervous. Further details at www.healthypetsupplies.co.uk

- If your dog is affected by the noise – do NOT ever punish him. If you go out and find your dog has been destructive whilst you were gone – don't punish him, stay calm, tidy up any mess and have a cup of tea! It is a completely pointless to punish him, damaging & extremely unkind to your dog, the bond between you both is affected and likely to make him even more stressed out.
- Our first reaction to a nervous anxious dog is often to stoke, cuddle and soothe, but hold back as your dog will interpret this as praise – a reward. You and your family members need to remain confident, relaxed and cheery try distracting him and when calmed give a cuddle then so you are not reinforcing any unwanted behaviour.
- Try to yourself remain relaxed and upbeat – conveying the message that there is nothing to worry about.
- If you are worried at all – get help and further advice now, the more in advance of the fireworks season the better. Think ahead and visit your veterinary clinic for advice and seek out the assistance of a behavioural councillor who will be able to help your dog. If you're not sure what to do – contact us for free advice.

Legislation:

The Fireworks Act: This law was introduced in August 2004, it makes it an offence:

- To be under the age of 18 and in possession of Fireworks in a public place.
- To let off Fireworks louder than 120 decibels.
- To let off Fireworks between 11pm and 7am.

The 11pm to 7am curfew is extended on the 5th of November, New year's Eve, Chinese New Year and Diwali. It is against the law to throw or set off fireworks in the street. Fireworks must not be sold to anyone who is under 18 years of age.

For a full copy of the legislation visit - <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2003/20030022.htm>

Animal Welfare Act: Under section 4 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 it is an offence to cause any unnecessary suffering to any domestic or captive animals. The penalty on conviction is either imprisonment up to 51 weeks or a fine of up to £20,000 or both. Enforcement of this section of the Act rests with Trading Standards, the Police or the RSPCA as appropriate.

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For further advice – please contact us:

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