



## Fireworks

A high percentage of our pets are very scared by the loud flashes and bangs that fireworks bring. It is important that we prepare ahead of the event to ensure their safety and well-being. Ideally we want to expose puppies and kittens to this type of stimulus so that they never become concerned. However if a noise phobia does occur we want to desensitize our pets to the sounds of the firework and this is the best long-term solution. Desensitization involves exposing our pets to the noises that trigger fear and anxiety but in a much more controlled manner. The idea is that the noise is played at a very low volume on a regular basis during normal activities. Noise CDs can be purchased commercially but a free download of firework noise is also available at the dogs trust website <https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice/dog-behaviour-health/sound-therapy-for-pets>. By making the fear stimulus a common occurrence animals become more tolerant and ultimately less fearful. Over a period of time the volume is elevated and the cd played less often but the animal remains unconcerned. This obviously involves a lot of time and effort. There is no quick fix to





firework phobias but there are some things that we can do to help our pets cope.

- Provide a den area away from noise- ideally in a darkened area with lots of comfy blankets which they can burrow into.
- Select a room with as few windows as possible
- Prepare this area a few weeks ahead of fireworks and encourage your pet to investigate it – feeding treats or toys
- Animals may well choose their own ‘bolthole’ and if so then allow them access to it and avoid encouraging them to come out of it. This is a coping mechanism and they will feel safer there.
- Ignore fearful behaviour which may be shown as crying restlessness, pacing or trying to escape as comforting the animal can be seen as a reward and this will escalate the problem.
- Equally do not punish the behaviour as this will only serve to increase stress.
- Stay calm yourself
- Draw curtains and blinds and play music or TV to mask outside events
- Exercise dogs in daylight hours and ensure that cats are kept in and have access to a litter tray.
- Provide chews or stuffed toys



- Feed pets their meal before the fireworks begin as this will make them feel sleepy
- Consider use of pheromone plug-ins and spray ADAPTIL for dogs and FELIWAY for cats. This has a calming effect. Try to use this for a few weeks ahead of the fireworks.
- Don't leave your pet alone



On occasions medication may be required to assist your pet to cope. All animals must have a health check to ensure that it is safe to use meds and so please leave adequate time to arrange a suitable appointment. Once this seasons fireworks are over we strongly advise desensitization for next year. The aim is to make our pets happy pets.

