

PET ADVICE 3

Fireworks and pets



The charity dedicated to helping sick, injured and homeless pets since 1897.



Fireworks and pets

Fireworks night can be a really frightening time for pets but there are things you can do to help them. Here are our top tips to help you keep your pet safe during this time.

While fireworks can be lots of fun for us, they're often a nightmare for pets. As well as being stressful for them, animals have really acute hearing and loud bangs and whistles can even cause them pain. But our simple guidelines are here to help:

Small pets

Rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, gerbils, mice, ferrets and birds are all easily frightened and should be treated with special care when fireworks are being let off.

- 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 they feel safe.
- If you can't bring your pet's hutch inside, turn their 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's enough ventilation.

Dogs and cats

- 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 catflaps to stop pets escaping

and to keep noise to a minimum. Draw the curtains and, if your pets are used to the sounds of the TV or radio, switch them on (but not too loudly) in order to block out some of the noise of the fireworks.

- Make sure dogs are wearing some form of easily readable identification – even in the house. They should have at least a collar and tag.
- Think about fitting pets with a microchip 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 they 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, whine, miaow and hide in a corner if they want to. Don't coax them out or disturb them – they're just trying to find some safety.
- Try not to cuddle and comfort distressed pets as they'll think you are worried too and this may make the problem worse. Instead stay relaxed, act normally and praise calm behaviour.
- Avoid leaving your pet alone if you know there are going to be fireworks nearby. If you do have to leave the house, don't get angry with your pet if you find they have been destructive after being left on their 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 or leave them in the garden or 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're enjoying it. Excessive panting and yawning can sometimes indicate that your dog is stressed.



Horses and ponies

- Fireworks must not be set off near livestock or horses in fields, or close to buildings housing livestock. Anyone planning a fireworks 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 their familiar environment and routine. If they're usually stabled, keep them stabled. If they're normally out in the field, keep them there as long as it's 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, make sure they remain as safe and calm as possible and respond to their reactions appropriately.
- If you know your horse reacts badly to loud noises speak to your vet 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 they are 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 you need to leave your horse in someone else's care during a fireworks show, leave clear instructions and contact details for you and your vet.

The laws about fireworks

- It's illegal for anyone under 18 to possess adult fireworks in a public place.
- Fireworks can't be set off by a private individual between 11.00pm and 7.00am except for certain nights of the year. On New year's eve, Chinese new year and Diwali (Hindu new year) they can be set off until 1.00am. On 5 November, fireworks can be set off until midnight.
- It's an offence to cause any unnecessary suffering to any captive or domestic animal.
- Unless retailers have a special licence they may only sell fireworks from 15 October to 10 November, 26 to 31 December and on the first day of the Chinese new year and Diwali, and the three days proceeding them.



Think ahead

- If you think your pet will struggle to cope with the fireworks season, speak to your vet six to 12 weeks beforehand. If you want behavioural advice it's best to look into it 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.

While this information is correct at the time of going to print all pet owners are advised to check www.bis.gov.uk/fireworks for current guidelines.



BIS
Department for Business
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Happy, healthy pets

Blue Cross advice leaflets are packed full of top tips to help owners with their pet questions. They cover a wide range of topics, from training a puppy to caring for an older cat. So if you need some support to help you with a pet problem, whether it's about a dog or a degu, we're here for you.

You can read and download our leaflets online at www.bluecross.org.uk

Visit our website to take advantage of all its features, including:

- blog posts from Blue Cross experts
- latest news
- events near you
- pets needing new homes

Or you can join in the chat on our online communities. Find us on Twitter and Facebook – just search for Blue Cross.



Blue Cross

Blue Cross has been dedicated to the health and happiness of pets since 1897. Abandoned or unwanted, ill or injured – we do what's needed to give every pet a healthy life in a happy home. We're a charity, so the more help you give us, the more help we can give pets.

How you can help

Blue Cross doesn't receive any government funding, so we rely on the generosity of pet lovers like you. There are lots of ways you can help the sick, injured and abandoned pets in our care, like making a donation, fundraising for us or leaving us a legacy.

Please call us on 0300 777 1897 or visit www.bluecross.org.uk



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