

## WHEN THE FIREWORKS START

- ☀ When the fireworks season begins, close any windows and black out the 'doggy play area' to remove any additional problems caused by flashing lights.
- ☀ Each evening before the fireworks begin, move your dog to the play area and provide toys and other things that he/she enjoys. Preferably, make sure that there are things for you to do too, so that your dog is not left alone.

## DOGS...

- ☀ Set a good example and ignore the fireworks noise yourself – play with a toy to see if your dog wants to join in, but don't force him/her to play.
- ☀ Exercise your dog during daylight hours – never take him/her for a walk when fireworks are being let off.
- ☀ If you know of another dog that is not scared by noises and gets on well with your dog, then keeping the two together during the evenings may help your dog to realise that there's no need to be afraid.

## CATS...

- ☀ If possible, keep your cat indoors when fireworks are likely to be set off – remember to lock the cat flap once he/she is indoors.
- ☀ Make sure that your cat has somewhere to hide if he/she wants to – for example, under or on top of some furniture or inside a cupboard. Don't try to tempt him/her out, as this causes increased stress.

## SMALL ANIMALS...

- ☀ If your pets live outside, partly cover cages, pens and aviaries with blankets so that one area is well sound-proofed. Make sure that your pet is still able to look out.
- ☀ Provide lots of extra bedding for your pets so that they have something to burrow in.



## REMEMBER, REMEMBER...

- ☀ If you are using fireworks at any kind of celebration, please use lower-noise fireworks, as they will reduce the likely stress caused to animals. You should make sure that pet and farm animal owners in the neighbourhood are aware of the date and time of the event.
- ☀ Firework debris and litter can harm animals so pick it all up after it has cooled down and dispose of it safely.
- ☀ Keep cats and dogs indoors while any bonfire is alight. Ensure that any bonfire is a safe distance from aviaries or rabbit/guinea pig accommodation.
- ☀ Bonfires can be fatal for wild animals such as hedgehogs, which can crawl into them to sleep. Build bonfires as late as possible to reduce this risk and make sure you disturb the bonfire's foundations to give any wildlife a chance to escape before it is lit.



# BANG!

## FIREWORKS FRIGHTEN ANIMALS



HELP KEEP THEM SAFE

[www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk)

Nowadays fireworks feature at all kinds of celebrations – not just bonfire night. Many people enjoy fireworks, but many animals are frightened by them.

If your pet is frightened by loud noises, don't ignore the problem. You should always seek advice from your vet who will, if necessary, be able to refer you to a professional animal behaviour counsellor.

## KEEPING CATS AND DOGS SAFE AND SECURE

- During the fireworks season, at nightfall, close all windows and curtains and put on some music to mask and muffle the fireworks sounds.
- If your dog or cat shows any signs of fear, try to ignore his/her behaviour unless there is imminent danger – for example, if he/she is likely to self-harm.
- Never show anger to your dog or cat if he/she appears frightened – this will only convince your pet that there really is something to be afraid of!
- Do not fuss over or try to reassure your dog or cat when he/she is frightened.

- Make sure your dog or cat is kept in a safe and secure environment at all times, so that he/she can't bolt and escape in reaction to a sudden noise. If you have had your pet microchipped you will certainly improve the chances of a safe return if he/she does escape.

## DOGS – BEFORE THE FIREWORKS START

- If your dog is frightened by fireworks, a dog-appeasing pheromone diffuser that disperses calming chemicals into the room may be a good option, or your vet might even prescribe medication.
- Owners of fearful dogs can also plan ahead by providing a 'doggy play area' in their home – choose one of the quieter rooms in your house.

- Before the fireworks season begins, train your dog to associate the play area with positive experiences. A good way of doing this is to play games with your dog in the play area, with a variety of toys. The toys should be swapped regularly and put away when not in use so that your dog does not become bored with them.
- Some dogs appreciate being able to withdraw when they are frightened, so the provision of a doggy den in the 'doggy play area' may help them to cope. For example, this could be a wardrobe or a cupboard. Packing this with old duvets and blankets will make it more comfortable and help to sound-proof the area. Give your dog access to this place at all times, even when you are not at home.

Acknowledgement for the information in this leaflet is made to Professor Daniel Mills MRCVS, Head of Biological Sciences at the University of Lincoln.



## TREATING YOUR DOG'S SOUND PHOBIA

In the long term, your dog needs to learn to be less afraid of loud noises. With proper treatment this is achievable, so that the next firework season will be less stressful for you and your dog.

The RSPCA recommends the *Sounds Scary!* CD therapy pack. This includes two CDs of firework, gunshot and thunder noises, together with a comprehensive information booklet and easy to follow instructions.



TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE *SOUNDS SCARY!* PACK INCLUDING DETAILS OF HOW TO PURCHASE A COPY, PLEASE VISIT: [WWW.RSPCA.ORG.UK/FIREWORKS](http://WWW.RSPCA.ORG.UK/FIREWORKS).