

Taking the Bang! out of Fireworks

Fireworks night (season!) is almost upon us and with it bang (literally!) go the chances of any pets being able to relax for the evening.

In the past your vet may have prescribed tablets to sedate your pet but did you know there are now better options to help?

A better alternative is a behavioural programme as outlined below, which will help to actually cure your pet's fear rather than just mask the signs.

How to cope with your pet showing fear of fireworks

- Do not comfort your pet if he is fearful, as this will only reward the behaviour.
- Do not punish him either, as that will heighten his anxiety.
- Do not react to the noises yourself.
- Try to use distraction i.e. loud familiar noises such as television or music or engaging in a game. Also be sure that curtains are drawn and the room is darkened.
- Provide your pet with a den-like area in which he can hide. This should ideally be in the same room in which you will be sitting in for the evening. The den area can be scented with DAP which is available in a spray.
- It is best not to leave your pet alone on the nights when there are loud, local firework displays. The pet may panic, and then be reluctant to be left on his own in the future.
- Make sure all interactions with your pet are upbeat and cheerful and avoid overtly soothing and reassuring tones.

DAP Diffuser – Dog Appeasing Pheromone (smelly hormone)

Plug in a DAP diffuser in the area where your dog will spend most of his time in the evening. Do so about two weeks before firework night.

This is an electrically heated diffuser device, which delivers a synthetic analogue of "dog appeasement pheromone" into the environment for four weeks. A refill is also available. This product is available from your veterinary clinic and can be purchased without seeing the vet.

The diffuser needs to be in place for 2 weeks after firework noise can be heard.



Sound Scary Desensitising CD – Gold standard in treatment for firework fears

You may wish to desensitise your pet completely to the sound of fireworks. The best way to do this is to use a specially recorded CD of firework whooshes and bangs. Now is a good time to start such a programme as it may take several months to complete. This is the gold standard in treatment for firework fears.

www.soundscary.com

Referral to see a Behavioural Veterinary Surgeon

If your pet has developed a severe reaction to fireworks (or other noises) or if noise fears have led to separation related problems, then longer-term drug treatment will be necessary. This needs to be combined with a behaviour modification programme that will include desensitisation and counter-conditioning. A referral from your regular Veterinary Surgeon can be arranged to see a Behaviourist.

Remember fears and phobias tend to worsen over time, not get better. It is much easier to deal with the pet's anxiety in the early stages, before it gets too severe.

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