

JIM'S PET PAGE



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FIREWORK SEASON IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER

I know it seems a little early but if you have a nervous pet you need to start planning now !

Firework night is probably one of the most distressing times of year not only for the pets but also their owner's. It is not unusual for many pets to be scared of the noises that fireworks make and this can make life a misery for owners and pets alike, especially as fireworks are no longer confined to just one night..

Here is a list of some of the things that you can do over the next few weeks to help make this time of year a little easier for all concerned.

In advance of fireworks night

1. If you know when a firework party is planned near you, a few days before you can make up a "den" for your pet to hide in. Ideally this should be in a corner and preferably where your pet has dug and burrowed previously. Make up a bed using bedding that is familiar to your pet and possibly include some old unwashed clothing of your own so that your pet can smell your scent. Then start to encourage him to use it 2-3 times a day by feeding him a special treat in the den.
2. On firework night, put some treats or food in the den although some animals will not feel like eating.
3. Minimise the noise and light coming into the house from outside – shut curtains and close all windows.
4. Try and mask any firework noise by having the radio or television playing at a comfortable level.

5. Make sure your pet has been out for a walk and has emptied its bladder at least an hour before fireworks are due to start. and make sure that cats have a litter tray
6. Keep all cats indoors whenever fireworks are expected and make sure all doors and windows are firmly shut. If walking your dog at night, make sure they are kept on a tight lead so they can't bolt if startled by a firework going off unexpectedly.

On firework night

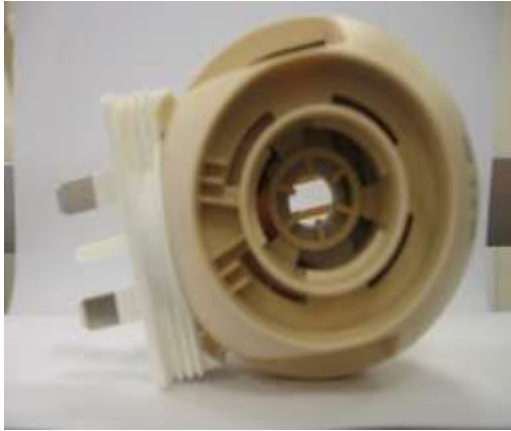
1. When the fireworks start, lead your dog to the prepared den and encourage him to stay there. If on the night when the fireworks start your pet deserts your lovingly prepared den and hides in a corner or under a bed or chair, don't try to coax it out. Where they are is where they feel secure.
2. Don't get cross with your pet as it will only make them feel more anxious.
3. Hard as it may seem, ignore your dog when he looks frightened or scared. Fussing over your pet or giving treats at this stage will only be seen as rewarding this negative behaviour so only give him attention when he starts to relax, and then possibly give him a treat as a reward.
4. Most importantly, stay relaxed yourself. If you become anxious, your pet will pick up on this and it will reinforce their belief that fireworks really are something to be scared about.

Contact your veterinary surgery

There are certain products and prescription medications available from your vet for pets with firework phobia.

Non prescription medicines

Non prescription remedies may work adequately alone or in conjunction with prescription medicines, depending on the severity of your pet's condition. You may prefer to try something different. One of the most useful products is a plug in diffuser which releases a pheromone into the air that only your pet can smell. The pheromone that is released mimics the smell released from a female nursing her puppies and it should make your pet feel more safe and secure. For maximum effect, the diffuser should be plugged in near your pet's den for at least 2 weeks before fireworks night and must be left on continually. The diffuser lasts about 4 weeks



and refills are readily available.



Recently, collars that contain the pheromone have also become available and these allow your pet to be exposed to a calming atmosphere 24 hours a day, these collars will also last about a month.



Prescription Medicines

There are medicines in tablet form that can reduce the anxiety of your pet on the night, your vet will need to advise you of the most appropriate product. These prescription medicines can work in conjunction with other products such as the ones I have listed below again your vet will advise you on this.



In extreme cases of firework phobia, your pet may start to react to everyday noises, for example, a dropped pan or a car backfiring, as these noises often sound like a firework. If this is happening, you will need to make an appointment with your vet to discuss how to work with your pet to reduce their anxiety, for example using desensitising CD's. These CD's though will not solve your pet's anxiety problems in time for this seasons firework displays, and they require dedication and time to be effective. The longer the phobia is allowed to continue, the worse it can get and the more difficult to deal with. Often these types of treatments are run in conjunction with a course of sessions run by a registered animal behaviourist. Again your vet will assist you by recommending one if appropriate.

If you are interested Laura, one of the nurses at Blake Vets will be running a complementary clinic for owners with dogs that are frightened of loud or sudden noises, give her a call and she will be happy to talk to you about it.

Well I hope that the advice helps to make the next few weeks a stress free as possible for you and your pets. Remember, if you are having a party, to follow the firework code and enjoy yourselves.

Jim