

Tips on managing your dog during fireworks

Before the fireworks begin

- Get your dog plenty of exercise earlier in the day. Before heading out make sure collar fits nicely and won't slip off head. Keep on leash as you never know if someone sets off fireworks earlier than expected.
- Top up your dog's water bowl. Anxious dogs pant more and get thirsty.
- Feed your dog a while before you expect any disturbances. Once the fireworks start your dog may be too anxious to eat.
- Walk your dog before dusk. It may be some time before it's safe to venture outside again for your dog to relieve themselves.
- Make sure you shut all doors and windows in your home and don't forget to draw the curtains. This will block out any scary flashes of light and reduce the noise level of fireworks. Don't forget to block off cat/dog flaps (doors) to stop dogs (and cats) escaping.
- Make a safe den for your dog to retreat to if they feel scared. Make sure to fill it with their favorite blankets, toys, or an item of unwashed clothing, as these may help them feel safe. Covering the crate, for example.

During the fireworks

- If possible, stay home with your dogs!
- Distract your dog from the noise by having the TV or the radio switched on at a decent level of volume.
- Try to act and behave as normal, as your dog will pick up on any odd behavior. Remain calm, happy and cheerful, as this will send positive signals to your dog.
- Your dog might choose to hide under the bed or behind furniture; if they come to you for comfort, make sure that you give it to them. Ignoring your dog would only make things worse as they wouldn't understand your withdrawal from them.
- Always reward calm behavior with dog treats or playing.
- Never try to force your dog to face their fears – they'll just become more frightened.

- Never try and tempt them out if they do retreat, as this may cause more stress. Do not try and coax your dog out of an area it goes to “get away or hide”. Let him/her be.
- Do not get upset with your dog being frightened. This will only make your pet more distressed. It is important to remember that it is natural for a dog to be scared of loud noises and unfamiliar sights and sounds.
- If you need to open the front door, shut your dog safely inside a room first.
- Do not try to desensitize a dog during the fireworks if they are showing high levels of stress. Desensitization can take days, weeks, or months. This also can pair the negative (fireworks, thunder) and turn what was a positive (you, treats) into a negative association with this pairing.
- Refrain from taking dog outside during fireworks unless absolutely needed. If you need to take dog out, ALWAYS take out on leash, even in a fenced in yard, and let them go “hurry” and then bring immediately back in with nice rewards given.
- Leave your dog something fun to do – like a frozen *Kong* filled with his favorite treats.
- For dogs with extreme anxiety, canine wraps such as a Thunder Shirt can be used.

Things owners should never do!

- Never take your dog to a firework display, even if your dog does not bark or whimper, don't assume he or she is happy. Excessive yawning and panting can indicate that your dog is stressed.
- Never tie your dog up outside while fireworks are being let off.
- Never leave dog alone outside during fireworks.