



APBC

ASSOCIATION OF PET
BEHAVIOUR COUNSELLORS

Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors
www.apbc.org.uk E: info@apbc.org.uk



FIREWORK SERIES

BEHAVIOUR ADVICE TO HELP DOGS

Gemma Stephen BSc Hons CAB
www.naturescompanions.co.uk

7 important points to keep your dogs calm during fireworks season. These tips are more successful if implemented a few weeks before (but can still be implemented during) the firework season.



Keep Your Pets Inside From Dusk

Limit walks to earlier in the day, before it gets dark. To burn off your dogs evening energy provide them with canine enrichment activities instead of a walk (See dog enrichment article). Be prepared to miss walks completely during this time as it can take 3 -14 days for dogs to recover from a highly fearful experience, such as fireworks.

Keep dogs on a lead or a longline during the day walks just incase there are any daytime firework surprises!

Reduce Noise

Before the fireworks begin, close curtains/blinds and windows. Turn up the TV/Radio volume. Change the room you are sat in to the quietest room in the house. Play calming music specifically for relaxing dogs such as classical fm or search for "calming music for dogs" on spotify®/youtube. Single instrument music, such as relaxing piano music, is a great choice for calming dogs.

Comfort Your Dog

Contrary to popular belief **YOU CAN COMFORT YOUR DOG** if they are scared during the firework season. Remain calm and softly spoken and offer attention and touch if your dog needs it. Please do not follow advice that suggests you push your dog away and ignore your dog when they are scared – **AS THEY DO NEED YOUR REASSURANCE**. Giving comfort to your dog will **NOT** reinforce their fear of fireworks. It can actually do more harm to your dogs stress levels to ignore them than to comfort them.

Be Prepared With Extra Help

If you are aware that your dog panics during this time, then speak with your vets a good 1 to 2 months before firework season to talk through the options for your dog. Please see the APBC psychoactive medication for possible options to discuss with your veterinary surgeon.

Consider Zylkene and Yucalm for mild cases and start administering before firework season begins and continue for 1-2 weeks afterwards. Try adding 6 drops of Bachs Night Time (Alcohol

free) Rescue remedy to their water, but please offer normal water nearby so they have a choice.

Try introducing Adaptil/Pet remedy spray to your pets sleeping area two weeks before bonfire night. If your dog relaxes in that area with the spray then consider putting a diffuser in that area permanently (You will need to keep the dog away from the area for a few hours while the diffuser begins to work) and leave it turned on 3 weeks before bonfire night and up to 1-2 weeks afterwards. But consider leaving in plugged in until after new years and Chinese new years.

Safety

When scared for their life, animals can often bolt to escape the danger. When fleeing in fear, there is no logical thinking to it, they just go!. So ensure all doors, fences and gates are closed and secure. Double check gardens for firework debris to avoid ingestion of the materials. Check microchip and tag details are up to date and tags are secure on collars. Do not leave your dog home alone during this time, ask family/friends for help or hire a dog sitter. Supervise toilet breaks outside and remain with them and use a lead or long line.

Build a Safe Haven

In a room or area your dog feels the safest, you can build a safe haven. You can use a metal or soft crate, with their bed inside or blankets and familiar safe smells such as clothing with your scent on. Try hanging blankets or towels over the sides.

DO NOT SHUT THE CRATE DOOR - leave it open.

You can also create little dens on or behind the sofa, under tables, beds, chairs and under the stairs using blankets. The den needs to be where the dogs wants to go and be. Set this up and put in some tasty treats, chews and toys, so they learn this is a safe area for them.

Fireworks = Good Things

With everything else in place now its time to prepare some things for your dog to do during the evening to keep them occupied. Licking, chewing and sniffing are calming behaviours for dogs. Provide items such as Kongs, snuffle mats, lickmats, puzzle games, toys and chew items. Use their ultimate favourite treat with these items to really help them during this stressful time. Eating things that they enjoy whilst sniffing, licking and chewing during the bangs and fireworks can help the dog start to make a positive association with those noises and fireworks. You can even limit the favourite treat to only the evening time to make it even more of a special and positive experience for your dog. Firm favourites could includes carrots or cheese. Know your dog and know what they enjoy. Don't worry if your dog cannot eat during this time as the fear response can shut off the digestive system so they may not feel like eating. The important thing is to offer, sit back and be there with them. and stay calm. If they do eat it is a good sign!



My Pet was very frightened by fireworks last year – what can I do?
Call a member of the APBC or visit our website www.apbc.org.uk