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## FIREWORKS ... AND YOUR PETS

Halloween can be a scary time for pets. loud noises and bangs, flashing colours and tiny people call to the door dressed in strange clothes and making funny noises. You can hardly blame your pet for being a bit wary and scared! With many pets, this fear can develop into a full-blown phobia. Dogs can be found trying to hide under the bed shivering, or trying to chew their way out to safety, while cats and other small pets (living indoors or outside) will often sit wide eyed and terrified, not knowing what to do or where to go.

### What can you do??

#### Keep animals safe

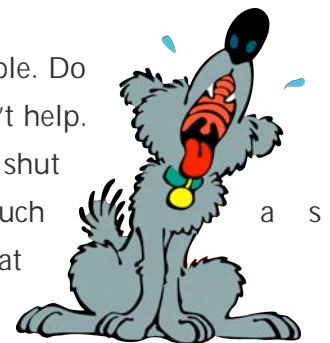
Keep your pets indoors. Cats should be locked inside (remember the cat flap) and dogs should be exercised during daylight hours before the noises and flashes start. Have pets microchipped at the vet, so that if they do get out and try and escape, they can be traced more easily. Don't forget your small furries, put a heavy blanket over their hutch if they have to be outside, or consider keeping them in for the moment.

#### Reduce the noise

Close all doors and windows to help keep the noise out. Close curtains where possible, to help muffle sounds and reduce chances of your pet seeing flashes of light. Consider leaving a radio or TV on in the room your pet is in to block out some of the noise and provide a bit of normality.

#### Provide Company

Try and stay with your pet, and be as calm and relaxed yourself as possible. Do not try to reassure your dog or cat, or make a fuss over him/her, it doesn't help. Also never show any anger, or try to tell him/her off. Ideally you should shut your pet into a safe area, and stay there yourself. Have something to do, such as read a book or interact quietly with other family members, and ignore what is going on as much as possible. If a dog comes over to you, it is OK to give him/her a quiet stroke, then stop and get back with what you were doing. Making any sort of fuss about things just signals to your pet that there really is something scary going on.



## Make a cosy den

Try to provide a hide-away area or den. It should be enclosed and have lots of soft bedding. Lots of blankets or old duvets will help to make it cosy and absorb some of the sound. Cats like to get up high and be out of the way. If possible try to leave them in a hiding place. They are best left there if this is what they choose, but try to remain quietly nearby if you can. Being there and being relaxed is a great help. Train your pet to associate the area with positive experiences eg. providing favorite toys etc. With time your pet can learn that this place is safe and enjoyable. So when fireworks happen it may choose to go here because it knows that when it is here, no harm will come to it and so it's more able to cope. It is important that your pet has access to its safe haven at all times even when you're not at home.

## What Can you use to help?

Pheromone sprays or diffusers (For both dogs and cats) or collars (dogs) can be a significant help. Collars/diffusers release these calming scent chemicals into the room are picked up by the animals' more sensitive noses, encouraging a feeling of being at ease. These need to be started around 3 weeks before the fireworks begin, and they work really well for some pets



Calming food supplements are available for dogs and cats. These come in liquid form that go on food, tasty tablets or even a fish flavoured cat gel that cats really seem to like. They can have a dramatic calming effect on some individuals and can be given for the whole of the firework period. They don't cause any sleepiness either, and don't cause any problems if your pet is on other medications.

Sometimes mild tranquilising drugs are appropriate, these are only available after a full consultation and check up with the vet, as they will make your pet sleepy and are not appropriate for every animal.

Preparation for next year -If you know your dog is going to be scared of fireworks, then you can buy CDs with firework noises. These come with a lot of helpful information and can be used to teach your pet to be less afraid of loud noises, including fireworks and thunder.

Most animals get worse with the (until they begin to go deaf!) so it diffuse the fear factor for your pet.



fear of loud noises as they get older is worth doing something to try to