

MEDICATION

In the past, sedatives were prescribed for pets who were afraid of fireworks and some owners still request this method. Research has shown that this is often not the best course of action and can make the fear worse long term.

When an animal is sedated, they are aware of the situation around them. Imagine being afraid of something, being aware it is happening but not able to do anything about it. This is the experience pets undergo when sedatives are used.

Much better is the use of anxiety decreasing drugs such as Pet Remedy and Zylkene which are natural products.

Extremely phobic animals can be treated with behavioural drugs. Please make an appointment to see the vet who will discuss the individual case, assess the health of your pet and prescribe the relevant medication.

All medications need to be closely monitored by your vet and should be given in plenty of time to take effect BEFORE any noise or panic occurs.

SMALL PETS

Don't forget that rabbits, guinea pigs and birds (in fact most pets) will find fireworks frightening too. If you have pets which live outside the following advice may help:

- Partly cover cages, pens and aviaries with blankets so that the area is sound proofed
- Ensure the animal can still look out
- Provide lots of extra bedding so your pet has something to burrow in

INFORMATION

If you would like any more information, please contact the surgery on 01729 823538 and speak with one of our qualified nurses, or visit the following websites:

www.daleheadvetgroup.co.uk
www.petremedy.co.uk
zylkenepet.co.uk
www.dogstrust.org

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Station Road
Settle
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Dalehead
Veterinary Group Ltd

FIREWORK FEARS



Tel: 01729 823538
www.daleheadvetgroup.co.uk



A GUIDE TO FIREWORK FEAR

Many of us look forward to bonfire night and the accompanying firework displays but recent research has revealed that 61% of us has had, or currently has a pet which is afraid of fireworks. Whilst this is an improvement of 12% since 2010 and is a credit to the work and intervention of owners, vets and behaviourists, it is still nearly two thirds of pets that are scared of fireworks.

Generally, most pets will struggle with fireworks as animals have acute senses; for them every flash and bang can be unexpected and alarming.

Common signs of fear in a cat can include:

- Cowering and hiding behind furniture
- Trying to run away or escape
- Soiling in the house
- Refusing to eat
- Overgrooming

Common signs of fear in a dog can include:

- Trembling and shaking
- Climbing onto owners
- Barking excessively
- Cowering and hiding behind furniture
- Trying to run away
- Soiling in the house
- Pacing/panting or digging up the carpet
- Refusing to eat

This leaflet contains advice on some of the things that can help to combat the fear our pets suffer.

WHAT TO DO?

Before The Event

If your pet becomes uneasy or worried, building a hiding place under the bed or stairs or making a refuge for them is a great way of giving them some security during this stressful time. The den should be in a dark, quiet area, perhaps a room with heavy curtains, blinds or no windows.

Creating an indoor kennel with blankets covering a crate, a dark cupboard, space under the stairs or an area behind the sofa with a throw draped over are all good examples of a den for your dog. The refuge should always have an escape route as enforced confinement will increase anxiety in many circumstances. Introduce the refuge a few weeks before the event, feed your pet there and provide toys to create a safe and pleasant place to be.

Cats are more comfortable up high so think about where to put their hiding place.

We recommend having your pet microchipped. It is now law in England and Wales for all dogs to be microchipped and registered to their keeper but if any of your pets escape and run away due to fear around fireworks there is a much higher possibility of you being reunited if they are microchipped.

Plug in a Pet Remedy diffuser in the room your pet uses most frequently. This is a natural way of tackling stress and anxiety using a blend of valerian, sweet basil and sage. Pet Remedy also comes in a spray which can be used in the den and on your pets bedding, or even on a bandana on your dog's collar.

A supplement such as Zylkene can help dogs and cats cope during the festivities. Zylkene contains a natural product, derived from caesin, a protein in milk which promotes relaxation in newborns after breastfeeding. Start Zylkene at least three days before the event is expected and continue throughout the firework season.

Anxiety shirts such as the Thundershirt place gentle, constant pressure on the torso of your dog or cat which can have been shown to have a dramatic effect on anxious, fearful or over excited animals—it's a bit like having a permanent hug!

Talk to an expert and discuss your pets behavior with a vet, nurse or behaviourist.

Tips and Tricks

- Ignore unusual behavior such as panting, shaking or whining unless your pet comes to you first for reassurance—give them affection, but no more than usual
- Do not punish or get angry with your pet, this will only make them more uneasy
- Make sure that your pet is in a secure and safe environment at all times so they don't bolt and escape if a sudden noise occurs
- Pull the curtains and switch on the TV or radio to dull the noise from the fireworks
- If you know of a dog that is friendly with yours and that is not scared by fireworks then consider keeping the two together—this may reassure your dog that there is nothing to be worried about
- Walk your dog earlier in the day before the fireworks are likely to start
- Feed a meal which is high in carbohydrates as this will make your pet sleepy

Long Term Management

Once this high risk time has passed it's a good opportunity to consider how you can best manage the situation long term to make it less frightening for your pet in the future. If left unmanaged these behaviors can get worse over time, resulting in increasingly uncontrolled behaviour.

'Sound de-sensitisation' is a common method used. The training is similar to that used in the programs for police dogs and horses. They work by introducing your pet to a tiny amount of the sound they are frightened of and then gradually increasing this exposure over time. It can be a long process, taking several months but it is well worth it in the end.