



THE BLUE CROSS

Britain's pet charity

Fireworks can be fun for you...



...but not for your animals

FIREWORKS&PETS

Every year thousands of animals will suffer as a result of fireworks being let off. Blue Cross animal hospitals across the country see a marked rise in pets requiring medication during such stressful times, and many animals are brought into Blue Cross adoption centres having run away from home.

Animals have very acute hearing. Loud bangs and whistles may cause them actual pain in their ears. But by following these simple guidelines your pet need not suffer.

SMALL ANIMALS

Rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, gerbils, mice, ferrets and birds all need to be treated with special care when fireworks are being let off. These animals are easily frightened. The Blue Cross advises that owners of such types of small animal should follow these precautions.

- Hutches/cages and enclosures should, if possible, be brought into a quiet room indoors, or into a garage or shed
- Give your pet extra bedding to burrow into so it feels safe
 - If you cannot bring your pet's hutch inside, you should turn its enclosure around so that it faces a wall or fence instead of the open garden
 - Cover any aviaries or hutches with thick blankets or a duvet to block out the sight of the fireworks and deaden the sound of the bangs, **but make sure there is enough ventilation**



Always:

- keep dogs and cats inside when fireworks are being let off
- close all windows and doors, and block off catflaps to stop pets escaping and to keep noise to a minimum. Draw the curtains, and if the animals are used to the particular sounds of TV or radio, switch them on but not too loudly in order to block out some of the noise of the fireworks.
- make sure your pets are wearing some form of easily readable identification (ID) – even in the house. By law, they should have at least a collar and tag, but think about fitting them with a microchip, so that if they do run away they have a better chance of being returned to you.

Never:

- take your dog to a firework display. Even if your dog does not bark or whimper at fireworks it doesn't mean it's happy. Excessive panting and yawning can sometimes indicate that your dog is stressed.
- tie your dog up outside while fireworks are being let off, i.e. outside a shop whilst you pop inside, or leave it in the garden or in your car
- walk your dog while fireworks are going off. Make sure your dog is walked earlier in the day before the fireworks start.
- shout at your pet if it is frightened, as you will only make it more stressed

You can help by:

- preparing a 'den' for your pet so it can feel comfortable, perhaps under a bed with some of your old clothes where it can hide when the fireworks start
- leaving your pet alone if it paces around, whines or miaows and tries to hide in a corner. Do not try to coax it out – It is just trying to find safety and should not be disturbed.
- trying not to leave your pet alone during such potentially upsetting events
- staying calm and acting normally. Praise your pet when it is calm.
- not shouting or getting angry with your pet if it has been destructive after being left on its own while you've been out



HORSES & PONIES

- Fireworks must not be set off near livestock or horses in fields, or close to buildings housing livestock. Anyone planning a firework display in a rural area should warn neighbouring farmers in advance.
- Try to make sure that fireworks are never set off near your horse's field or stable. Wherever possible tell neighbours and local fireworks display organisers that there are horses nearby, so that they can ensure fireworks are set off in the opposite direction and well away from them.
- Unfortunately we are often not forewarned about private fireworks displays so think and plan ahead for 5th November and New Year's Eve. Be proactive about finding out when other celebratory occasions involving fireworks might occur.
- It is sensible to keep your horse in its familiar environment, in its normal routine with any companions to make it feel secure.
- If your horse is usually stabled then keep it stabled. If it is normally out in the field, keep it there as long as it is safe, secure and not near the fireworks' display area.
- Ensure that you or someone experienced stays with your horse if you know that fireworks are being set off. This way you can observe its behaviour, ensure that it remains as safe and calm as possible and respond to its reactions appropriately.
- If you know your horse reacts badly to loud noises or unusual circumstances speak to your vet or perhaps consider moving your horse for the night.
- Try to remain calm and positive as horses can sense unease in a person and this might make things worse if the horse is startled.

- Be careful yourself. Try not to get in the way if your horse becomes startled as you may get hurt.
 - Don't take the risk of riding when you think fireworks might be set off.
 - If it is absolutely necessary for you to leave your horse in the care of another person during a fireworks show, then ensure that you leave clear instructions and contact details for yourself and your vet should any problems arise.



The laws concerning fireworks

- It is illegal for anyone under 18 to possess a firework in a public place
- Fireworks cannot be set off by a private individual between 11pm and 7am except for certain nights of the year
- It is an offence to cause any unnecessary suffering to any captive or domestic animal
- No person is to supply a category 3 and above firework to a private individual except during certain times of the year.

The Blue Cross advises that pet owners seek behavioural help for their animal six to 12 weeks before firework season begins.

While this information is correct at the time of going to print all pet owners are advised to check www.berr.gov.uk/fireworks for current guidelines.

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