

Fireworks and Pets: A Bad Combination

The most popular “fireworks holiday” season is upon us. Although the actual date of July 4th is not yet here, people are already setting off firecrackers around the area, which makes it a good time to remind pet owners that pets and fireworks don’t mix.



Unless you know for a fact that your pet will not be upset by fireworks, it is ill-advised to bring the family dog to the local fireworks display. Dogs’ “...acute sense of hearing makes them more sensitive to the sounds of fireworks” (<https://www.purina.com/dogs/behavior-and-training/why-are-dogs-scared-of-fireworks-11-things-you-should-know>). Each burst of fireworks or firecrackers startles your dog anew; it’s not like he or she knows the sound is coming. Imagine how you feel when startled by a loud noise; then imagine how that feels for your dog, over and over again.

The duration of a fireworks display means a prolonged exposure to blasts of loud noise that can severely stress a dog. According to veterinary medical expert Janet Tobiassen Crosby, DVM, the dog may exhibit symptoms of noise phobia, including shaking/trembling, excessive drooling, barking/howling, trying to hide or get out of the house/enclosure, refusing to eat food, and possibly even losing bladder or bowel control (<http://vetmedicine.about.com/cs/diseasesall/a/petsfireworks.htm>).

Even when dogs are home, some have been known to break windows or chew themselves out of a crate in their efforts to escape the noise. As a result, the Humane Society of the United States reports that “...animal shelters around the nation report a dramatic increase in lost pets during the [July 4th] holiday.” (http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/dogs/tips/fear_thunder_loud_noises.html).

If your dog is safe at home but there are fireworks happening nearby, the best thing to do is try to provide your dog with a comfortable “safe” place to hide. This could be a crate that he is accustomed to as his “go to” safe spot. You could also try making a comfortable place for him to lie in a more enclosed room, such as a bathroom or large closet. Pet MD also recommends creating a positive distracting stimulus, such as a game or a favorite treat or toy. (www.petmd.com/blogs/dailyvet/2009/June/09-4226). You might also want to consult with your veterinarian about using drugs to calm your dog if her noise phobia is severe.