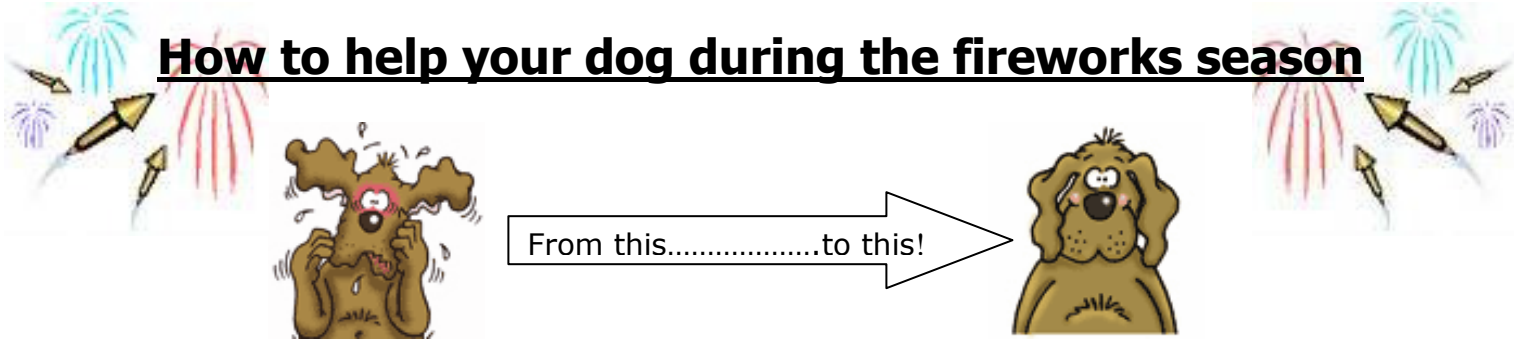


How to help your dog during the fireworks season



If your dog has a firework or noise phobia, preparation and knowing what to do is vital if dogs are going to get through firework night and similar events with the minimum of fear and stress. Try following these guidelines to help your dog.

Two weeks before a firework event

1. **Create a refuge** for your dog – a special place where your dog can go to get away from the sounds he hates. He may already have a favourite room but if not then choose a room that is naturally quiet, located towards the centre of the house and with as few windows as possible. Put lots of blankets for your dog to dig/burrow in, and maybe an old jumper of yours so the dog can be comforted by your scent. The refuge should be accessible to your dog at all times and it is vital to make sure doors are fixed so that they cannot accidentally shut and trap the pet inside or out of the room.

2. Plug in a **D.A.P.® diffuser** in the refuge. It needs to be left on - do not switch the plug on and off. D.A.P. is Dog Appeasing Pheromone, a plug in which mimics the properties of the natural appeasing pheromones produced by a bitch after the puppy's birth. It provides reassurance and comfort, and stabilises the emotional state of the puppy. Research has shown that these effects persist into adulthood. Clinical trials have shown an 80% improvement in the clinical signs most frequently observed by owners of dogs with a fear of fireworks.



On the day of the event

1. When the season begins try to move your dog to a **blacked out room** at sundown with toys etc for him and preferably things for you to do as well, so he is not abandoned in the room. Blacking out the room removes potential additional problems from flashing lights etc.

2. Make sure your dog is kept in a **safe and secure** environment at all times so that it doesn't bolt and escape if a sudden noise occurs.

3. Provide bowls of **food and water** and a few special chews in case your dog fancies something chewy to reduce his tension. Let your dog go outside to the toilet at least an hour before any planned firework display.

4. Put some **music** on, if your dog (and you) can tolerate it, rap or something with a lot of constant drumbeats is best. It doesn't have to be very loud as long as there is a constant distracting beat to the music
5. **Don't punish** your dog when he is scared, it will only make him more frightened.
6. It is tempting to try and soothe your dog to relieve his fears, but this is the worst thing to do. It gives your dog the impression that there is something to be frightened of, and rewards him for being scared. Also, if your dog comes to think of you as the only person who can soothe the fears then he may panic if there are fireworks when you aren't around to help.
7. **Ignore the noises** yourself and try to engage your pet in some form of **active game**. Try to appear **happy and unconcerned**.
8. If you know of a dog that is not scared by the noises and gets on with your own dog then keeping the two together during the evenings may help. Playing with the non-fearful dog if your own dog becomes scared may help to encourage the fearful dog that all is not so bad after all.

Medication may be useful in some cases, but should only be used **under veterinary supervision**. Your vet will be able to tell you if medication is suitable for your dog. (Dogs with mild phobias, some elderly dogs, dogs on other medication, or dogs with aggressive tendencies are unlikely to be suitable).

After the event

1. Leave the D.A.P.® diffuser plugged in for one week.
2. If it is likely that similar events will happen several times in the same period, maintain a D.A.P.® diffuser during the whole period.
3. Don't just ignore the problem because it only happens once or twice a year. Ideally we need to reduce your dog's fear so that it can cope with any loud noise at any time of the year. Many dogs can be treated using behavioural methods called desensitisation and counter-conditioning. Specially made recordings of fireworks can be used to train dogs not to react to the noises they fear and a CD with full instructions called "**Sounds Scary**" is available from your vet.

