

# Taking *the fear* out of fireworks

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**Fireworks can be frightening for our pets. Their enhanced senses make the loud bangs, vibrations and flashes very scary.**

Luckily, there are some simple steps you can take to prevent pets becoming scared while they are young, or to help keep older pets safe and calm.

The first step is to spot the signs that they're starting to become afraid.

## **DOGS**

- Trembling and shaking
- Clinging to owners
- Excessive barking
- Covering and hiding
- Trying to run away
- Soiling the house
- Pacing and panting
- Refusing to eat
- Seeming depressed or withdrawn
- Freezing
- Yawning and licking lips
- Digging

## **CATS**

- Covering and hiding behind or on top of furniture
- Trying to run away
- Soiling the house
- Refusing to eat
- Seeming depressed or withdrawn
- Crouching to the ground
- Big pupils
- Swishing their tail

## **RABBITS**

- Stamping hind feet
- Staying motionless
- Trying to escape
- Eating less
- Hiding



# Fireworks

## Advice from PDSA Vets

### PUPPIES AND KITTENS

It's important to get pets used to the sound of fireworks while they're young, as part of their **socialisation**, so they're less likely to be scared later in life.

Using **pre-recorded sounds** to help them get used to the loud noises, including fireworks, is a great way to prepare them.

Start out playing them quietly, rewarding your pet with a yummy treat a new toy or by playing a game. Gradually build up their tolerance until they remain calm while the sounds are playing loudly.

### PETS WITH PHOBIAS

If you know your pet is scared of fireworks it's important to **speak to your vet** in the first instance. There are lots of things they can suggest that should help – some pets may need some **simple changes at home** to help them become less afraid. Others may need a **professional behaviour therapy plan** or prescribed **medications** to help them stay calm.

### SMALL PETS

Fireworks can also affect small pets.

Fortunately there are things you can do to help them feel safer and less frightened.

**Sound-proof hutches** by partly covering them with blankets and put in **plenty of bedding** – this helps keep noise out and gives them somewhere to hide.

For indoor small pets, move their enclosures away from the doors and windows and shut doors, windows and curtains to help **reduce the noise**.

### WILDLIFE

If you're having a bonfire in your garden, make sure **pets are safely away** and **check it carefully for hedgehogs and other wildlife** immediately before lighting.

We recommend sticking to **professional firework displays** to keep wildlife safe, as well as your pets, or those belonging to your neighbours.

**For your rabbits, why not try ...**  
making an extra hiding place from a cardboard box full of hay?

# How to **prepare** your pets for fireworks

## **WEEK 1** (At least 6 weeks before)

**Desensitise pets to noise** – playing fireworks noises quietly and rewarding calm behaviour in the run up to fireworks will help pets become accustomed to the sounds. Gradually increase the noise as the weeks progress, making sure they stay calm.

## **WEEK 2** (5 weeks before)

**Secure your home and garden** – fearful pets may panic and their instinct is to try to escape when they are scared. Make sure 'escape routes' such as holes in fences are secure in advance.

## **WEEK 3** (4 weeks before)

**Microchip** – make sure your pet's microchip details are up to date, so if they get scared and run away you can be reunited. If your pet isn't microchipped speak to your vet about getting them booked in\*.

## **WEEK 4** (2 weeks before)

**Build a den** – give your pet a safe and secure place to hide by building

them a den. Cover a table with a blanket and fill it with soft and cosy bedding, their favourite toys, water and treats. Let them come and go as they pleased so they learn it is a safe place. Watch how to build a den here: [www.pdsa.org.uk/fireworks-den](http://www.pdsa.org.uk/fireworks-den)

## **WEEK 5** (1 week before)

**Pheromones** – pheromone products can sometimes help relieve stressed pets. They are designed to mimic natural cat or dog pheromones and come in various forms, including sprays, plug-in, diffusers and collars.

**Create a playlist** – using music to mask the sound of fireworks can help keep pets calm. [www.pdsa.org.uk/calming-playlists](http://www.pdsa.org.uk/calming-playlists)

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Remember to speak to your vet if you're worried

\*A legal requirement for dogs

# Top Tips

## for on the night

1. Walk your dog while it's still light.
2. Make sure your pet isn't left alone.
3. Keep doors, windows, cat and dog flaps closed.
4. Draw the curtains when it gets dark.
5. Move outdoor pets into a well ventilated shed or garage, away from the windows.
6. Let your pet hide if they want to.
7. If your pet is used to seeking reassurance from you, comfort them as you would normally.
8. Keep your tone, mood and routine as normal as possible.
9. Make sure you have treats and toys at home.
10. Never punish your pets – it's not their fault they're scared and it adds to their anxiety.



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