

## **Preparation for the Firework Season**

With bonfire night fast approaching, it can be a difficult time for nervous dogs and their owners.

The Association of Pet Dog Trainers UK, have put together a list of suggested tips to help keep anxious dogs - and other pets - as calm as possible during displays.

Be sure that all pets are kept indoors during firework season. Keep the curtains closed, the lights on and music or television to help cover bangs and flashes. If you find that your pet is particularly nervous, plan ahead for next year and try to desensitise them by getting a fireworks sound effects CD and gradually getting them used to the noise in the weeks and months leading up to bonfire night.

If your pets become very nervous and want to hide under the bed, let them - if they come to you for reassurance, give it.

Ensure that you give them a secure comfort area such as a crate covered with a blanket (do not shut the door, but allow your dog to use it as he wishes) or den to enable them to hide if they want to during the worst of the noise.

Try to give dogs a long and vigorous walk during the day to enable them to sleep through the worst of the noise where possible. Refrain from night walks as displays tend to begin as soon as it gets dark.

Give pets as many distractions as possible during the peak of displays such as toys, Kongs, chews and titbits.

Make sure that pets cannot accidentally escape during displays by keeping doors and cat flaps shut and locked.

Make sure that your pet is appropriately identifiable in case he/she does escape during the fireworks. In addition to the identification tag required by law, APDT, UK recommends microchipping.

If you have a particularly anxious pet, you should speak to your vet about treatments that can help. Both traditional and homeopathic remedies - such as Flower Essences and other natural products are available, and have been found to be very useful in many cases. It is important that you discuss any treatments with your vet before using them.

If you are familiar with Tellington Touch then use your skills to help your dog during this time. Calming Signals may also help.

If you live in a particularly active fireworks area, you might consider taking your pet to a quieter location or to stay with a friend or relative. Always remember to update your pet's identity tag with the temporary address.

Try to avoid setting off fireworks in your own garden. If it is unavoidable, do so as far as possible from the house. Better still, ask someone you trust to look after your dog in their home for the time the display will be going on.

Never take pets to an organised firework display or have them outside during your own display.

All the above are for dogs - and other pets - who are already anxious. It is even better to work hard at habituating your puppy to noises and other situations before fear or phobias can set in. Talk to your vet about this, or to an APDT, UK member when you book your puppy in for his classes.