

My pet is terrified of fireworks What can I do?

You are not alone – recent research suggests that almost half of dogs in the U.K. show some level of fearful response to loud noises

What to do straight away

- **Provide a den or hiding place** - Animals naturally hide when they are scared and it can help to provide a 'safe place' which they can squeeze into, like an understairs cupboard or an indoor kennel with blankets over the top and inside. An ideal place is somewhere near the centre of the house, or somewhere they have already hidden.
- **Muffle the sound of fireworks** - Close curtains, shut outside doors and windows, and have your pet as near to the centre of the house as possible. Put on the TV or radio to mask the bangs.
- **Keep them inside** – Don't let pets outside when fireworks are likely or during a display. Take dogs out for toilet purposes before it gets dark and then keep them in. A firework going off when they are outside can lead to a fear of going out.
- **Don't over-fuss them** – This can be difficult, but if they rely on you for comfort during scary events, they will be less able to cope when you are not at home and make matters worse in the long term.
- **Stay calm yourself** - Most pets can sense when their owners are worried, and this increases their stress. Let them hide in the den, and leave them there until the fireworks have finished and they come out. You can give your pet lots of fuss once they emerge.
- **Don't get angry** - Although your pets behaviour may be annoying, it is happening because they are scared and getting cross will only make them worse. Don't try and take your pet out of its hiding place – this increases their stress and could lead to aggression.
- **Prepare for unusual behaviour** – Fear can make your pet behave out of character. For example, if they anticipate that going into the garden predicts a loud noise, they may hide or show aggression to avoid going outside.
- **Talk to your vet** - They can advise short-term measures which may include medications, particularly if they don't settle but pace around in distress. This will help reduce your pets stress during upcoming firework events and help prevent their fears becoming worse. Your vet can also advise a long-term preventative approach.



What to do in the long term

Fears of fireworks don't get better on their own – in fact they are likely to get worse over time and lead to other behaviour problems. Behaviour therapy (including noise desensitisation) is generally very successful at changing response to fireworks and other loud noises, but the earlier you seek help, the better the outcome is likely to be. Discuss this with your vet - referral to a qualified animal behaviourist may be best for some pets.

Zylkène is a novel product proven to help manage stress in many common situations in dogs and cats. It can also help your pet adapt to change. Zylkène is natural, palatable and easy to give with food, and only needs to be given once daily.

Ask your vet if Zylkène can help your pet manage firework stress, short or long-term. It may also be used to aid behaviour therapy such as noise desensitisation.

Prepared in association with Dr Rachel Casey BVMS PhD DipECVBM-CA Dip(AS)CABC CCAB ILTM MRCVS European Specialist in Veterinary Behavioural Medicine. © registered trademark.
Intervet/Schering-Plough Animal Health, Walton Manor, Walton, Milton Keynes MK7 7AJ

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