



## Behaviour Advice Sheet No.2

### SURVIVING FIREWORKS NIGHT

Fireworks night and the days surrounding it can be a very scary time for all pets, however some dogs and cats appear to be even more sensitive to the loud noises produced at this time. These animals are said to have a sound phobia. There are many ways you can help make this time as stress free as possible for your pet, and

#### Two weeks before the event:

##### Make a Refuge:



Some pets become very distressed and destructive during phobic events, especially when they are alone. Dogs and cats really benefit from having a refuge where they can go to get away from the worst of the sounds. The refuge should be available to your pet at all times, whether you are at home or not.

- Chose a place where your pet already likes hiding, i.e. a room with small windows, or a room in the centre of the house where sound levels are low.
- Darken the room by keeping the windows and curtains shut.
- Install a pile of bedding and old clothes for the dog or cat to dig into and hide under (sprinkle with a few drops of lavender aromatherapy oil as a relaxant).
- Play familiar music, with speakers positioned on a windowsill to mask nasty noises coming from the outside. Rhythmic music is best but only if your pet is comfortable with it.
- Provide food, and plenty of water.
- Install a DAP diffuser (for dogs) or a Feliway diffuser (for cats) in the hiding place near to where your pet rests. It is best to install this 14 days before a known firework event, and the diffuser must be left switched on at all times.
- Regularly hide food treats and chews in the refuge to encourage your pet to go there.

D.A.P and Feliway are easy to use plug in diffusers which releases a product that helps to alleviate fear and stress related signs in the dog or cat.

It is beneficial to keep your cat confined to the house for the week leading up to firework night. Provide them with a litter tray.

Make sure your pet is microchipped so ensure that they can be traced should they manage to escape.

## One the day of the event

- Do not punish or over fuss them during the event and always stay calm and act normally.
- Check that your pet(s) are definitely inside the house and that all escape routes to the outside are blocked.
- Make sure your pet is kept in a safe and secure environment at all times so that it doesn't bolt and escape if a sudden noise occurs.
- When the season begins try to move your pet 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. (The refuge – see above). Blacking out the room removes potential additional problems from flashing lights etc.
- Wherever your pet chooses to hide, leave well alone until they feel safe enough to emerge.
- Put some music on. If your pet (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.
- Ignore the noises yourself and try to engage your pet in some form of active game.
- For the dog: If you know another 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. If using drugs, they should be given so they take effect BEFORE any noise starts or panic sets in.

## After the event



- Leave the D.A.P / Feliway diffuser plugged in for one week.
- If it is likely that similar events will happen several times in the same period, maintain a D.A.P / Feliway diffuser during the whole period.
- Don't just ignore the problem because it only happens once or twice a year. Instigate a desensitisation programme once the season is over and you have control over the environment again.

Sounds Scary is a unique therapy package available from All Animals Veterinary Clinic. The system, developed by internationally renowned veterinary surgeons that exclusively treat pets with behavioural problems, uses both desensitisation and counter conditioning techniques that are proven to reduce sound phobias in dogs. Most importantly the system allows you to help understand and treat your pets phobia problem within your own home.

If you have any concerns or questions regarding noise phobias and there treatment, **please contact us at All Animals Veterinary Clinic on 01375 399033.**