

## Fireworks and Pets: A Bad Combination

The most popular “fireworks holiday” season is upon us. Although the actual date of July 4<sup>th</sup> is not yet here, people are already setting off firecrackers around the area, which makes it a good time to remind pet owners that pets and fireworks don’t mix.



Unless you know for a fact that your pet will not be upset by fireworks, it is ill-advised to bring the family dog to the local fireworks display. Dogs’ “...acute sense of hearing makes them more sensitive to the sounds of fireworks” (<https://www.purina.com/dogs/behavior-and-training/why-are-dogs-scared-of-fireworks-11-things-you-should-know>). Each burst of fireworks or firecrackers startles your dog anew; it’s not like he or she knows the sound is coming. Imagine how you feel when startled by a loud noise; then imagine how that feels for your dog, over and over again.

The duration of a fireworks display means a prolonged exposure to blasts of loud noise that can severely stress a dog. According to veterinary medical expert Janet Tobiassen Crosby, DVM, the dog may exhibit symptoms of noise phobia, including shaking/trembling, excessive drooling, barking/howling, trying to hide or get out of the house/enclosure, refusing to eat food, and possibly even losing bladder or bowel control (<http://vetmedicine.about.com/cs/diseasesall/a/petsfireworks.htm>).

Even when dogs are home, some have been known to break windows or chew themselves out of a crate in their efforts to escape the noise. As a result, the Humane Society of the United States reports that “...animal shelters around the nation report a dramatic increase in lost pets during the [July 4<sup>th</sup>] holiday.” ([http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/dogs/tips/fear\\_thunder\\_loud\\_noises.html](http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/dogs/tips/fear_thunder_loud_noises.html)).

If your dog is safe at home but there are fireworks happening nearby, the best thing to do is try to provide your dog with a comfortable “safe” place to hide. This could be a crate that he is accustomed to as his “go to” safe spot. You could also try making a comfortable place for him to lie in a more enclosed room, such as a bathroom or large closet. Pet MD also recommends creating a positive distracting stimulus, such as a game or a favorite treat or toy. ([www.petmd.com/blogs/dailyvet/2009/June/09-4226](http://www.petmd.com/blogs/dailyvet/2009/June/09-4226)). You might also want to consult with your veterinarian about using drugs to calm your dog if her noise phobia is severe.