



... Some tips to Help Your Pet survive bonfire night

Bonfire night can be a very scary time for pets, particularly the sound sensitive breeds such as Border Collies. It is now fashionable to have firework displays at any time of year bringing untold misery for your pets, particularly around November 5th. The following tips may help to reduce the stressful effects that these displays may bring.

- Keep your pets indoors at night during the firework period which can extend for a while before November 5th. as well as for a couple of weeks or so afterwards.
- If you have to leave them alone at night leave on a radio or television and draw the curtains to black out the room, removing the fear of associated flashing lights. Leave lights on in some rooms and leave others in darkness so that your dog can choose where it feels safest.
- Make certain that your pet has a den to hide in if it is frightened. This can be an indoor crate with a sheet over it or a space under a table, bed or behind a sofa. Put its bed there if possible and **DO NOT DISTURB** it whilst it is in there.
- The most important influence is your reaction to your pet's fearful behaviour. Never punish your dog when it is frightened, as punishment, apart from being pointless, cruel and counter productive, would confirm that there was something to be frightened of. Don't cuddle or try to reassure the dog either as this rewards the behaviour and makes the dog think that you approve of the behaviour. It is very important to **IGNORE** your dog's fear and *only reward calm behaviour*. This means

DO NOT look at your pet
DO NOT speak to your pet
DO NOT touch, fondle or cuddle your pet

- When dogs are scared their instinct is to flee or hide. Keep all doors and windows closed and keep the house escape proof so that they can't bolt in terror.
- Make sure that your dog is kept in a safe and secure environment where it cannot escape and suffer injury. Check that it is microchipped or is wearing an identification disc just in case despite your vigilance it finds a way of escape.
- Put some loud music on, particularly something with a lot of constant drumbeats if you can both tolerate it.
- Ignore the noises and remain calm yourself, engage in an active game with the pet.
- Prepare for out of character behaviour brought on by fear.

We find **ADAPTIL** (available from your vet) very effective for nervous or fearful dogs. These should be plugged in close to your pet's bed, in the room it uses to relax and spend most time. They are perfectly safe, and mimic the pheromones given off by a nursing bitch which calm her puppies giving them confidence. Ask your vet for further details. It is helpful to leave the diffuser plugged in for a week before the event and for a couple of weeks afterwards. Do not switch the plug off and on.

Homoeopathic remedies are also very effective and very safe. Unlike chemical sedatives they can be administered when the dog has already begun to show fear. **ACONITE** is particularly helpful in cases of extreme fear and panic. You can get advice and remedies by mail order from Ainsworths Homoeopathic Pharmacy in London, telephone them on: 0207 9355330

Also useful is a combination homoeopathic remedy called '**ANXIETY**' showing an effectiveness rate of 91% in a controlled study by vets. This is available from The Company of Animals, telephone them on: 01932 566696

Also available from The Company of Animals is a CD for desensitisation therapy, a proven technique for the treatment and prevention of sound phobias in dogs. Well worth a try if used early enough.

We are so lucky that our own dogs seem impervious to firework noise, but for so many, this time of year in particular can be a miserable time. As I write, 4 weeks away from Bonfire Night I can hear the sound of fireworks in the distance. Until those in authority come to their senses and tighten up controls for the sale and use of these explosives there is little we can do for our pets other than try to minimise the stress for them using the above methods.