

BAXTER'S CAMPAIGN ADVICE TO HELP KEEP CATS AND DOGS SAFE AND CALM AT FIREWORK TIMES

**Based on information provided by Cats Protection,
Dogs Trust and Battersea Dogs and Cats Home**

Before fireworks begin

- If your pet has struggled with fireworks before make sure to visit the vet well in advance of times you expect fireworks locally. This will ensure that you have time to trial any prescribed medication or try noise and sound CDs that aim to treat sound phobias. You can also ask about DAP – Dog Appeasing Pheromone, a scent that can comfort your dog and help him or her cope better with their fears or a pheromone plug-in diffuser such as Feliway® which can have a beneficial effect in calming cats.
- Walk your dog before fireworks are likely to commence to make sure that your dog is well exercised and relieved before the fireworks begin. Likewise, keep your cat inside during times that fireworks are likely to go off.
- Try to settle your pet before the fireworks start. If your pet is in familiar safe surroundings it will help him cope better with the noise.
- Provide a safe hiding place around times when fireworks are anticipated. Make sure your pet has somewhere safe to hide in his or her favourite room, perhaps under a table with a blanket draped over for a dog or on an elevated surface for a cat. A cupboard under the stairs also makes a good retreat for dogs but it's a good idea to encourage them to use it in advance so that they can get used to this new spot before the fireworks begin.
- Also block off tight spaces or escape route which may be unsuitable or dangerous.
- Close the curtains to reduce the likelihood of firework flashes causing distress and turn up the volume on your TV or radio to drown out the firework noises. Alternatively if your pet responds well to certain music, make a compilation and play it at a reasonable level.
- Make sure that your pet can be identified with ID tags / microchipping. In the worst case scenario, if your pet runs away there is a greater chance of them being reunited with you if found by someone you don't know.



During fireworks

- Don't punish a cat or dog for cowering or reacting to the fireworks as this will intensify his or her fear.
- Allow your pet to hide in its chosen safe place and avoid encouraging him or her out for affection or forced cuddles. The latter may serve to confuse your pet. Wherever your pet decides to settle for the night, a long lasting chew or toy can be a helpful distraction from the noise outside.
- Don't leave your pet alone in the house during likely firework times. He or she may panic and this could result in an injury.
- Keep your pet indoors.
- Change your pet's routine if necessary so that their outdoor time is before the fireworks begin and provide a litter tray for cats.
- Act normally. Remaining calm and quiet may help to reduce your pet's anxiety. If you behave unusually for example following them around or being overly affectionate, you are likely to arouse their suspicion.
- Keep sounds from your TV, radio or music loud enough to mask firework bangs, with your curtains closed until the fireworks have ceased each respective evening.

After fireworks

- If your pet does react badly to fireworks consider seeking a referral from your vet to a qualified behaviourist such as a member of the Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors regarding desensitisation programmes to help him or her cope more easily next time. As these programmes generally take several weeks or more to complete, they are not something that can be started in the final run-up to firework season and must be carefully planned.

General advice for owners of puppies and kittens

- The best long term strategy to help cats and dogs to overcome, or even better to avoid, firework fear is to ensure that puppies and kittens are desensitised to noises they are likely to experience during their lifetime. This can be done, for example, by playing socialisation CDs to puppies and kittens at a young age in surroundings where they feel safe and secure. Ask your vet for advice/ details.

