

DEALING WITH FIREWORKS GUIDE



Fireworks can make celebrations exciting for us, but they're not always fun for our pets. In a recent survey*, 44% of pet owners reported that their pets are scared of fireworks.

There are things we can do to help keep them calmer and safer. It is up to you as their owner to help pets cope and make sure their fireworks nights are as easy as they can be.

* PDSA, Online survey 2013

44%
surveyed



Does my pet need help coping with fireworks?

Generally, most pets will struggle with fireworks. Animals have acute senses: for them every flash and bang can be unexpected and alarming. Think about how your pet reacts to loud noises. Do they show any of the following behaviors?

Cats and Dogs

- Cowering or hiding behind the sofa
- Trying to run away or escape (this can include digging up the carpet)
- Housebreaking accidents
- Restlessness, e.g. pacing and panting for dogs, and over grooming for cats

Dogs only

- Excessive barking or whining

If they show any of these signs, your pet might need help coping.

What can I do to help?

Ideally, it's best to prepare for the event some time in advance. Speak to your vet at least six to twelve weeks in advance. Long term behavioral therapy should be looked at 6 months in advance.

We'll start with short term help, and then look at long term management.

Short Term Management

A few weeks before:

1 Talk to an expert

It's a good idea to discuss with your veterinarian or behaviorist any changes you can make in the short term to help your pet.

2 Build a den

It's important that your pet has their own safe place with which they have positive associations. This gives them somewhere to hide when they are uneasy or worried. A den (or crate) is useful all year round, but is especially good for the firework season.

- **Familiarization** – prepare the den at least three weeks before for your pet to get used to it.
- **Location** – put the den or hiding place in a room where your pet usually likes to hide and where they feel comfortable. For example, if they like to hide behind the sofa, put it there, although make sure it is away from any windows.
- **Free Access** – allow your pet to access the den freely at all times. This way they have chosen to go there and are not forced. Do not use it as somewhere to send them as a punishment.
- **Size** – ensure the den is large enough for your pet to comfortably stand up, lie down, stretch out and turn around.



For dogs



Smells – line the crate with used blankets, towels or old clothes to make it smell familiar.



Treats and Toys – provide treats and toys in the den, to enable your dog to associate it with positive things.



Sound – cover the den with a blanket when appropriate to muffle the sounds further.

For cats



Think 3D – cats feel more comfortable up high; think about where you put their hiding place.



N+1 – Like all resources, make sure you have a hiding place for each cat, plus one extra. Even a single cat needs two dedicated hiding places.

3 Give them Zylkene

A supplement like Zylkene can help dogs and cats cope during festivities which incorporate firework displays. Start Zylkene at least one week before the event is expected and continue throughout the fireworks season. Keep in mind this time can extend for a few months, and in some areas well into the New Year.

4 Update their Identification

Your pet might try to run away if fireworks go off near them. Just in case, make sure that the data linked to their microchips and the information on their tags is fully up to date so they will be reunited with you more quickly. It's better to do it sooner, rather than later, as some people will start setting off fireworks as soon as they are available in the shops.

5 Walk your dog in the light

If possible, walk your dog when it is still light outside. This reduces the possibility of them being exposed to any fireworks being set off a few days early and your dog becoming uneasy. This can be tough in autumn and winter with the shorter days; you will need to plan accordingly.

The Night Of

Preparation/Before it gets dark

- Walk your dog earlier in the day before the fireworks are likely to start.
- Once all of your pets are inside, make sure all windows, doors and cat flaps are securely closed. This will reduce the chances of your pets bolting/running off.
- Provide extra litter trays for cats if they are not used to being confined to the house.

During the displays

- Always keep cats and dogs inside the house when fireworks are being set off. Do not take your dog to a fireworks display!
- Pull the curtains and switch on the TV or radio to dull the noise from the fireworks.
- Try not to leave your pets by themselves while fireworks are going off. Pets will be more relaxed when they have familiar faces around.
- Don't force your pets to come to you, especially if they are in their hiding place or den.
- Don't react to the fireworks yourself.
- Play with a toy and see if your pet wants to join in, but don't force them.
- Ignore unusual behavior, such as panting, shaking or whining, unless they come to you first for reassurance. Give them affection, but no more than usual. Pets often pick up on their owner's worry and overcompensating could make things worse.
- Provide distractions, for example new toys or treats.
- **DO NOT** punish or get angry with your pet! This will only make them more uneasy.

Long Term Management

Once this high risk time has passed, it is a good time to consider how you can best manage your pet's situation long term to make it less frightening next time. It's worth being aware that if left unmanaged these behaviors can get worse over time, resulting in increasingly uncontrollable behavior. It can also have the effect of worsening their response to other unexpected loud noises such as door slamming or thunder.

Sound desensitization

One of the most common methods is using a "sound desensitization" program. There have been studies that have shown this to be effective for dogs and cats. The training is similar to programs that police dogs and horses go through before being put into public work situations. They work by gradually exposing your pet to a tiny amount of sound and then increasing it slowly over time. It can be a long process, but it's worth it in the end.

There are many sound desensitization programs available. These programs include clear written and verbal instructions, plus a practice track to help get you started and use the program effectively.



Ask your veterinarian or qualified behaviorist for more advice or visit: www.myhappypets.com/zylkene



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Zylkene® can help improve quality of life for pets—and their owners!

Zylkene contains a natural product, derived from casein, a milk protein with calming properties. It is used to help pets cope when facing unusual and unpredictable situations or before occasions such as a change in their normal environment. There are many ways our pets can respond in these situations such as accidents, chewing, excessive barking or licking and not all animals respond in the same way. Zylkene has become a familiar product for veterinarians, behaviorists, veterinarian technicians, and pet owners for use in helping pets stay calm in challenging situations.



Zylkene is EASY to give

| | | | |
|--|--------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| | Zylkene® 75mg | Cats Dogs 10 lbs and under | 1 capsule a day |
| | | Cats over 10 lbs Dogs 11 – 22 lbs | 2 capsules a day |
| | Zylkene® 225mg | Dogs 22 – 32 lbs | 1 capsule a day |
| | | Dogs 33 – 65 lbs | 2 capsules a day |
| | Zylkene® 450mg | Dogs 33 – 65 lbs | 1 capsule a day |
| | | Dogs 66 – 132 lbs | 2 capsules a day |

Recommended Use

Ideal for short term use:

- Begin use approximately 1 week prior to onset of event
- Dosage may be increased per your Veterinarian's direction
- Continue as needed

May be used long term:

- For best results, use for at least 30-60 days
 - Modify as necessary
 - Extend as required



For more information visit
www.myhappypets.com/zylkene

This brochure is one of a series of owner education leaflets sponsored by Vetoquinol USA, manufacturers and distributors of Zylkene.

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