

Paws The Bangs.

Fireworks Safety Guide For Pets

Our Campaign

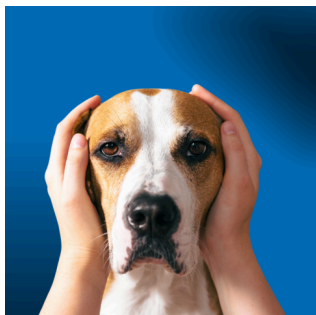


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Each year, thousands of pets and horses suffer fear, stress and injury due to fireworks. That's why Petpals, alongside our in-house vet Dr. Sophie Bell, have launched our 'Paws The Bangs' campaign to raise awareness and protect animals during fireworks season.

Over the course of our campaign, we'll be sharing expert advice, practical tips and videos to help pet owners prepare and support their animals. From calming techniques to safe spaces, our goal is to make fireworks season safer for all.

We're also calling for a kinder future — by advocating for drone displays and quieter alternatives at public events. It's time to celebrate without causing fear. For every paw, hoof and heart affected — let's spark change, not fear.



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Preparing Your Pets For Fireworks



Preparation is key — the earlier you start, the more confident your pet will feel when fireworks season arrives.

- **Sound desensitisation:** Introduce your pet to firework noises gradually by playing recordings at a very low volume while they're doing something they enjoy, such as eating or playing. The key is to keep the sound so soft that they hardly notice it. Over time, you can gently raise the volume, but always pair it with something positive. If your pet reacts — even just turning their head towards the sound — it means it's too loud, so lower it again. Progress should always be slow, steady, and stress-free.
- **Practical checks:** Ensure collars fit properly, tags are engraved with current phone numbers, and microchip details are up to date. Many frightened pets sadly end up lost each year after bolting in panic.
- **Secure your garden and outdoor spaces:** Check fences, gates, and boundaries for weak spots and make repairs before firework season. Frightened pets may bolt, squeeze through gaps, or jump over barriers in panic. Ensure gates are locked, panels are sturdy, and always supervise pets outside during evenings when fireworks are likely. For small pets, move hutches or runs either into a garage or shed, or inside where possible, or cover them securely to reduce noise and light. For horses, double-check stables, fences, and field boundaries, and remove any hazards that could cause injury if they spook.
- **Get them used to calming aids:** Pheromone diffusers, calming coats, or herbal remedies often work best when introduced early, so your pet associates them with normal, everyday calmness rather than sudden stress. Always speak to your vet in advance to choose the right calming aid for your pet's individual needs.

Myth Busting: Fireworks & Pets



When it comes to fireworks, myths can be dangerous. Here are some of the most common misconceptions – and the truth behind them:

- **“Comforting your pet makes them worse.”** False. Offering reassurance does not ‘reward’ fear – it strengthens trust and can help your pet cope better.
- **“Pets eventually get used to it.”** Not true. Each new firework season can intensify anxiety, causing long-term stress and behavioural issues.
- **“Only dogs are affected.”** Cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, birds, and especially horses are all at risk. Horses can injure themselves or others if they bolt in fear.
- **“Fireworks are just one night a year.”** Sadly, they now stretch across weeks – from late October through to New Year’s Eve – meaning repeated exposure for animals.
- **“Animals will be fine outdoors.”** Extremely unsafe. Pets should always be brought indoors or secured in safe stabling/housing during displays.

Creating A Safe Space At Home



Animals need a haven where they feel secure. Creating this in advance means your pet will naturally retreat there when fireworks begin.

- **Location:** Choose a quiet room away from exterior walls and windows.
- **Set up a den:** Use a crate, tent, or table draped with blankets to make a snug retreat. Add favourite toys, treats, or a piece of your clothing with your scent.
- **Block sights & sounds:** Close windows, curtains, blinds, and use draft excluders to limit noise. Heavy curtains or blackout blinds help to reduce flashes.
- **Background sound:** Keep the TV, calming music, or a white-noise machine running. Classical music and “relaxation for pets” playlists can be especially effective.
- **Small pets:** Bring hutches and cages indoors where possible. If not, partly cover them with thick blankets to muffle sound, leaving plenty of ventilation.

Signs Of Stress To Watch For



Recognising stress early helps you take steps before it escalates.

- **Dogs:** Pacing, whining, drooling, panting, shaking, lip-licking, hiding, destructive behaviour.
- **Cats:** Wide eyes, dilated pupils, ears flat back, excessive grooming, refusing food, spraying or toileting indoors, hiding.
- **Small pets:** Rabbits thumping their back legs, guinea pigs freezing or bolting, reduced eating, teeth grinding.
- **Horses:** Sweating, trembling, stamping, attempts to flee, kicking stables, injuries from bolting or thrashing.

Understanding these signs allows you to comfort effectively and avoid escalation into injury or illness.

How To Comfort During Fireworks



Your calm presence is often the most powerful tool.

- **Stay close:** If your pet comes to you for comfort, reassure them with soft words and calm stroking. If they hide, don't drag them out — let them choose where they feel safe.
- **Be calm yourself:** Animals sense our emotions. Staying relaxed and upbeat helps them feel more secure.
- **Distraction techniques:** Food puzzles, chew toys, training games, or a favourite activity can take focus away from the noise.
- **Company matters:** Some pets settle better with another animal companion. If safe, allow bonded pets to stay together.
- **Never punish fear:** Fear is not bad behaviour — scolding will only make them more anxious and damage trust.

Exercise & Feeding Before Dark



Routine changes can reduce stress and keep pets safer.

- **Dogs:** Walk earlier in the day before fireworks start. Always keep dogs on a lead during firework season, even in the daytime — unexpected bangs can still spook them.
- **Cats:** Bring cats indoors before dark. Secure doors, windows, and cat flaps, and provide indoor litter trays.
- **Feeding:** Feed pets slightly earlier than usual. A full stomach can help them feel more relaxed and sleepy.
- **Stables & outdoor pets:** Double-check locks, gates, and fencing. Remove anything that could cause injury if a horse panics.

By adjusting their usual scheduled walks, playtime, and feeding schedules **in advance** of fireworks season, you'll help your pet settle into a calm routine — making the evenings far less stressful when the bangs begin.

Vet Recommended Products & Tips



Veterinary advice can make a big difference, especially for pets with severe anxiety. Always consult your vet well ahead of firework season.

- **Pheromone diffusers & sprays:** Products like Adaptil (dogs) or Feliway (cats) can provide reassuring signals.
- **Calming supplements:** Nutracalm, Zylkene, Calmex, and similar nutraceuticals may reduce anxiety when given in advance.
- **Pressure vests:** Items like Thundershirts can help dogs feel secure through gentle pressure.
- **Sound therapy:** Specially designed apps and playlists can desensitise pets over time.
- **Medication:** For very anxious pets, vets can prescribe short-term medication. This should only be given under veterinary advice and planned well in advance of fireworks season.

Kinder Alternatives To Fireworks



Celebrating doesn't have to mean suffering for pets and wildlife.

- **Drone shows & laser displays:** These create beautiful spectacles without noise, smoke, or risk of harm.
- **Low-noise fireworks:** Many companies now produce fireworks with reduced bangs — a compromise for communities wanting visual celebration without the trauma for animals.
- **Community advocacy:** Encourage councils, MPs, and event organisers to adopt safer alternatives. A growing number of UK towns are already moving in this direction.
- **Supporting campaigns:** Join initiatives like our **#PawsTheBangs** to raise awareness and push for kinder celebrations.

Thank you for reading our guide.

Please share this resource to help other pet owners keep their pets safe and calm this fireworks season.

Join our
Paws The Bangs.
Campaign



#PawsTheBangs