

The sight and sound of a fireworks display can pose a serious risk to your animal's safety.

### Many animals are terrified by fireworks.

Unfortunately our celebrations can inspire fear and distress in animals, so it's essential responsible pet owners adequately prepare their animals for fireworks displays in their area.



Animal behaviourists believe that animals become fearful during fireworks displays because the sights, sounds and smells are extreme and unfamiliar to them.

Animals not accustomed to fireworks are likely to react in a negative way, and sadly, it is common for pets to panic and escape during suburban fireworks displays.

In their panic, these animals may become disoriented and/or lost, and some may be killed or severely injured.

Horses and other livestock may panic and try to escape the overwhelming impact of a fireworks display.

It is a condition of Fireworks Permits issued in Tasmania that surrounding residents are notified of your intention to use fireworks.

Noise generated from fireworks has the potential to cause conflict and concern to people in the immediate area of the display, as well as frighten pets and other animals such as horses and other farm animals. **At least 48 hours prior** to the date of your fireworks display please ensure that you properly inform residents in the surrounding area of the display, as well as inform property owners who have animals. The timing of this notice must be such so as to allow sufficient time for persons to manage their pets and animals. In any event at **least 48 hours** prior notice of the intended fireworks display must be given to people in the

**If you are planning a fireworks display on your property, please be a good neighbour and give surrounding residents as much notice as possible to allow them to make adequate arrangements for their pets**

**RSPCA** Tasmania

# Fireworks are no fun for animals



To keep your animals safe and calm during a fireworks display, it is essential to take precautionary steps:

### **The RSPCA recommends that pet owners stay home with their pets**

If your pet begins to show signs of distress, encourage calm behaviour with praise and attention. Do not pat and comfort a scared dog, it will only increase the problem. Instead be calm, cheerful and in control.

If someone cannot be at home, ensure your pets are indoors in a room that is safe and familiar.

Leave a radio on and leave some favorite things (old clothes with the your scent on them) in the room for added comfort.

In case of escape, make sure your pets are well-identified with a microchip and collar and tag.

Make sure you leave plenty of water.

It can also help take your dog out on a lead for plenty of exercise well before the fireworks start.

Dogs that panic can choke themselves on a collar or lead, so never use a check chain or slip collar to restrain your dog.



Also give them a good filling meal. A tired and well-fed pet will be far less anxious during the night.

### **Other animals**

Rabbits, guinea pigs, birds and other small animals should be safely secured in a garage or outbuilding, away from the sight and sound of fireworks.

As an alternative, making sure there is sufficient ventilation, you can cover the cage with thick fabric to help muffle the sounds.

Horses, goats and other livestock should be securely stabled or moved to a different location during fireworks displays in their immediate area.

### **DO NOT TETHER YOUR ANIMALS**

Tethered animals are likely to feel trapped and will panic even more. They can seriously injure themselves (and others), become entangled, or even choke in their efforts to escape.



### **Bonfires**

If you build a bonfire remember that it may have attracted small animals and birds looking for food or shelter during the day, so be sure to give it a good shake and make some noise before you light it.



### **Desensitisation may help to calm pets afraid of loud noises**

By regularly exposing animals to small samples the kind of sounds that frighten them, you may begin to desensitise them.

Start very quietly. Play the recorded sound just loud enough that you begin to notice some irritation, such as ear-twitching. Attract your dogs attention. Play, act as if everything is normal, and reward calm behaviour with praise and attention. Keep this up for a few minutes at a time, and try to leave the sounds on after you leave the room.

Repeat the process on a daily basis, gradually increasing the volume over the course of a few months. You will need to allow three to six months in advance to complete this kind of training, and with some animals you will need to continue it indefinitely or they will become sensitive again in between fireworks displays.

### **Unfortunately for some pets the fear of loud noises is completely overwhelming.**

When pets have this kind of abnormal and excessive fear, it may feel like there is nothing you can do to calm them down.

If your pet suffers from an unmanageable phobia of fireworks or thunder, then it is at risk of injury when it panics.

To help keep your pet safe, you should take the time to make an appointment with your vet well before the date of the fireworks display. Discuss the problem with your vet or an animal behaviourist, who may recommend behavioural therapy, and in some cases may prescribe some calming medication.

