



Fireworks and Noise Phobia

The end of the year brings many reasons to celebrate and unfortunately this also brings many reasons for your pet to be nervous. If you have a pet suffering from a noise phobia, such as fireworks on Guy Fawkes Night and New Year's Eve, this can make the party season stressful. Preparation is the key when trying to address the problem: the sooner you start the better.

What is Noise Phobia

Noise phobia is an over-exaggerated fear of loud sounds. Whilst some form of response is natural, if it becomes terrifying and distressing for your pet it is essential that something is done.

Short-term Management

It's helpful to know when to expect a firework display, so make sure you're up to date on the timings of all the local shows.

- 1) Ensure pets are safely inside and secure doors, windows and cat flaps.
- 2) Take dogs for walks early before it gets dark and fireworks start and ensure cats are kept in with a litter tray.
- 3) Provide a den or hiding place for your pet to use; somewhere they can feel safe.
- 4) Make sure your pet is microchipped so that if they do escape they can be easily found.
- 5) Close curtains, play music or have the TV on to help mask the sound of fireworks.
- 6) Stay with your pet, act normally and remain calm and unresponsive to fireworks; animals will pick up on your reactions.
- 7) Do not comfort your pet if it is showing signs of fear or anxiety; this is telling your pet it is right to be worried.
- 8) Do not get angry with your pet, however frustrating it may be, as this will only make them worse.

What Can My Vet Do?

For short-term control or extreme situations, Larkmead can prescribe anti-anxiety medications for your pet. These should not be seen as an easy alternative, but should be used in combination with the advice above. The use of calming agents such as **Adaptil**, **Feliway** and/or **Zylkene** can be very helpful in reducing stress levels. Most pets need to be given these some time before any noise starts; your vet can give you detailed instruction on their use.

Long-term Management

A long-term control programme should be instigated as soon as possible to stop your pet from reinforcing his phobia. Contact your vet for information about desensitisation packages that slowly introduce your pet to various loud sounds over time, such as the **"Sounds Scary" CD** which can be ordered from Larkmead. Your vet will also be able to put you in contact with appropriate behaviourists if you feel you need further help with this process.

Noise phobias are painful for everyone in the household and with some forward-planning and preparation they can be greatly reduced. It's a good idea to start looking into what you can do now, before Bonfire night is upon us.

Thundershirts

Thundershirts are now available from Larkmead. Call the surgery or ask at reception to order for next day collection.

Thundershirts are pet coats that create a calming effect by providing constant and gentle pressure to the torso. Users describe how their pets appear to be more relaxed and sleepy when wearing the Thundershirt.

The benefits of this product are that it can be used at short-notice and there are no potential side-effects.

