

New Year Safety Tips



Fireworks can be very stressful for your pets. Here are 10 tips on keeping them and you safe and as stress free as possible. Have a safe and happy New Year.

- 1. Know when fireworks will be happening and how they'll impact your home.** Contact your local municipality to find out when your area is likely to have fireworks. But even if fireworks aren't allowed in your town, be prepared to have someone set them off anyway. Mark the dates on a calendar so that you can keep track of when to ensure your pets are cared for. If you know or suspect that the fireworks will be heard at your house, take the precautions outlined in the following steps.
 - Check that your pets' ID tags and microchips are in date; mark the calendar when renewal payments are due and be sure to make the payments. If your pet does go running off during fireworks events, it's much easier to be able to identify its ownership with these features.
 - Fireworks upset pets as a result of the noise, smell of sulfur, and flashing lights.
- 2. Prepare your dog for dealing with noise by exposing your pet to other sounds.** Desensitization of noises helps to prevent a phobia of loud noises. But all pets won't respond to this so take other precautions as well.
- 3. Prepare the house.** The house becomes your pets' safety zone, so it's important to prepare it properly.
 - Keep some lights on. Keeping a light on will calm your pet and make them feel more secure, rather than being scared in a dark room.
 - Dampen the noise. Close the curtains in the room and, if your animal is a caged one, cover up the cage in a thick blanket, but make sure it is breathable so your animal doesn't suffocate. This will also help to stop the flashes of light affecting your pet.
 - Plan to use familiar sounds to drown out the noise of the fireworks. Music from a stereo or turning on the TV are likely familiar sounds that can sooth your pet. Just make sure not to play these sounds ridiculously loud as they can become bothersome themselves.
- 4. Prepare the room.** Select a suitable room where you will contain the pets for the duration of the fireworks. An inner room that is least impacted by the noise is ideal. It should be a room that you can close off to prevent your pet from running about the house and injuring itself, wrecking furniture, etc. If you have more than one pet, be sure they don't mind being confined in the same room, or select several rooms for different pets. For example, dogs and cats will usually appreciate being kept separate.
 - Make the room cozy. Put down familiar, clean bedding somewhere pleasant such as under a table, on or behind a chair, etc. Add some familiar chew toys, scratch pads, balls, etc., to keep your pets amused and distracted.
 - Ensure that the room temperature is pleasant; warm if it's cold weather, or cool if it's hot weather.
 - Consider whether sound might be soothing. If your pet is used to music, turn some on at normal volume. Also, the sound of rainwater is very soothing to pets.

- Use lavender. This is optional, but you might like to use lavender scented items to help calm your pet. Use a spray or gently bruise the leaves and flowers of some fresh plants. Just make sure that it's out of reach of your pet. Using heated scent oils or incense is **not** recommended as a frantic pet can knock them over and start a fire or injure themselves.
 - Add a litter tray for cats.
 - Remove any sharp items from the room in case your pet starts jumping or running around.
5. **Prepare yourself.** In the desire to ease our pet's pain, sometimes we can transfer some of our anxiety and upset to the pet. If you've prepared properly in advance, there is no need to feel upset and worried as you can be reassured about the safety of your pet.
 - Realize that the startled and frantic reactions of your pet are often the principal source of your own upset. Being ready for their reactions can help to keep you calm as well.
 6. **Confine your pet.** Half an hour to an hour before the fireworks are due to be set off, place your pet into the chosen room. If you're concerned about not being able to locate your pet (for example, cats aren't always easy to find), consider finding your pet several hours earlier. Mealtime is a good time to round up every pet, provided it falls before the fireworks are set off. If your dog needs a walk, be sure to walk them before confining them.
 - Even if your pet is caged, place it into the secure and comfortable room you've selected.
 - If your pet is a horse or other farm animal, make sure it has clean bedding and is inside the stable or barn.
 - If your pet is overly afraid of loud noises consider a trip to the vet before the event for possible medication.
 7. **Provide food and hydration.** Be sure to leave sufficient water and food for your pet in the confinement space. Many pets will be uneasy, or even frantic. If your pet has access to water, it will help calm them, and food supplied in your pet's regular portion will make them feel like it's a normal day.
 8. **Keep an eye on your pet, and if possible, stay with them.** Comfort them and talk to them. Be friendly but don't fuss over them too much; this can increase their anxiety if they picks up on yours and can reward and encourage fearful behavior. If it's not possible to stay with them, (perhaps because you're out or busy (you may be at the firework display), don't worry - the previous steps should ensure that your pet has been adequately cared for.
 - Allow your pet to hide somewhere in the room if wished. It's your pet's way of coping and dragging them out of a safe spot can increase their anxiety levels. Don't fuss over them too much.
 9. **Check on your pet after the fireworks.** Reassure them and remove the protection (blankets, etc.) as long as you're sure that the loud fireworks are over. Let them have free run of the house to see how they behaves before considering letting them return outside (it might be best to wait until morning, if possible). Check for signs of stress in your pet.
 - For cats, signs of stress include running away, soiling the house, hiding away and refusing to eat.
 - For dogs, signs of stress include barking a lot, running away, soiling the house, hiding and cowering, clinging to owners, whimpering, trembling and shaking, pacing and panting, and refusing to eat.
 - If your pet is stressed, keep them indoors overnight. Keep a litter tray somewhere in the house, or walk a dog after the fireworks but don't let them off their harness and be sure to stay with them the whole time.
 10. **Do a yard sweep before letting your pets back outside.** Collect any sparklers, firecrackers, etc., as well as party items and broken objects. This will prevent your pet from being injured by unfamiliar objects.

