



Banstead Village Veterinary Surgery

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Dogs and fireworks/other fear triggers

In past years we have grouped our cat and dog advice together. We feel that this is no longer appropriate as they react differently to fear.

So, welcome to our first dog edition!

Firstly, lets break down responses into categories,

- Fear – this is a normal response to any new situation, a coping and survival strategy
- Prolonged fear - this is an out of proportion response
- Anxiety – this is the anticipation of a fearful event
- Phobia - this is abnormal, immediate excessive fear

A natural response to fear is flight (run & hide), or freeze (catatonia).

We need to understand which categories your dog fits in to advise the correct course of action.

Some dogs may seek comfort and reassurance from you, if this is the case – give it! But do not mollycoddle!

There are a number of measures you can put in place in preparation for this firework season:

- Adaptil diffusers, collars and sprays are pheromone therapies that provide reassurance and calming messages to your dog (separate leaflets available on request)
- YuCALM Dog capsules, these are a supplement containing L-Tryptophan & Vit B6 which are the precursors to serotonin (separate leaflet available on request). We recommend giving YuCALM Dog for a minimum of 3 weeks initially with the best results seen in 8 weeks, which means starting in early October at the latest!!
- ThunderShirts are vests which fit snugly around the dog's body to provide a relaxing effect, much like swaddling a baby. We recommend that you introduce the thundershirt before they are worried, to create a positive association (separate leaflet available on request).
- If your dog has previously displayed a severe fear reaction to fireworks, please book an appointment to discuss the possibility of using a prescription medication.
- Prepare hiding places in the home. Build a den in a dog crate/ under a table/ behind the sofa. Prepare these areas with blankets for comfort and hiding under and remove any potential hazards. Be aware that you may need to train your dog to use the den in the weeks before bonfire night. Offering toys and treats as a distraction and as a reward.
- Ensure that your dog's microchip contact details are up to date.
- Ensure that you DO NOT remove collars with identity tags on. Ensure that your dog's collar is nice and snug and can only fit two fingers under it.

During the firework season

- Exercise your dog before dusk. Forgive any toileting accidents during this season.
- Ensure that your external doors and windows are closed and secure

- Den is accessible or freedom to hide in alternative places
- ThunderShirt on your dog
- Ensure that your Adaptil diffusers are refilled if running low, spray blankets and ThunderShirt.
- Close the curtains to obscure the flashing lights and muffle the bangs.
- Play calming music with a bit of a beat.
- Distract with food, toys etc
- Reward signs of coping
- Most important – Stay calm! Your dog will read your emotions.

Some dogs may look for reassurance from you. If so, give it!

If you would like any further information, order any of the above products or to book an appointment please contact the surgery.

Something to consider post firework season!

- Desensitisation training - this is supposed to be the best way of dealing with this problem by getting them used to the noises slowly over time. It takes months and cannot be done during firework season!
- Relaxation training

Talk to our nurses about these, they are always happy to offer guidance

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