

Keep Dogs Safe Amid Fireworks and Festivities

Fireworks and unfamiliar smells can terrify dogs and may cause destructive behavior.

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Once the cracking fireworks get started on the Fourth of July, panic strikes cats and dogs. The booming sounds, bright flashes of light, and harsh odor of gunpowder make this national holiday a day for pets to run for cover.

Dr. Gregory Hammer, American Veterinary Medical Association president, said many dogs experience a great deal of fear on this holiday, adding that it can lead to serious problems. "Nobody really knows why some animals find it so unnerving," he said.

Cats, he said, tend to run and hide when fireworks start. When it comes to dogs, they can exhibit destructive behavior, he said.

Dogs are known to chew through doors and screens, or to run away. It's important to make sure pets are kept in a part of the house where they don't hurt themselves or something else, Hammer said.

Other tips for pet owners on Independence Day: Consult with a veterinarian about anti-anxiety drugs. Check with your vet ahead of time to ensure your dog will safely react to any medication. Turn on the radio or television to dull the sound of fireworks. Keep curtains and blinds closed so pets aren't scared by flashes and lights. Give your dog a special toy or treat puzzle to keep him occupied and help him form a positive association with fireworks. The best solution might be to stay home with your pet when the fireworks start.

By taking the right steps, you and your dog can celebrate America's Independence Day safely together!