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Fireworks phobia and your dog.

How should you care for your dog during fireworks displays?

Across the world and also in South Africa annual celebrations may involve fireworks.

Unfortunately, many dogs are terrified by firework displays which can indirectly pose risks to animal safety by causing them to take flight and try to escape the loud noises.

Dogs in particular may be afraid of fireworks and many try to run away, sometimes injuring themselves in the process.

Your dog might end up several kilometers from home.

Dogs have been known to jump through plate glass windows to escape loud noises, and easily jump over, or dig their way under fences that would normally contain them and hung themselves on security fences.

What you can do for your dog?

Prepare early.

Talk to your vet about the treatment options available for managing noise phobias – ask them about any new treatment options.

Take your dog out for exercise before the fireworks start e.g. reasonably long walk, then after a couple of hours you can feed a meal. A tired and well-fed dog will be less anxious during the night. If you can, stay home to be with your dog.

Let your dog be with you and try to be calm and normal.

Avoid fussing over your dog excessively but try to engage them in normal activities such as playing.

Reward your dog for their calm behavior, rewards include giving them treats and giving them their favorite dog toy.

Close the blinds/curtains, create a comfortable hiding place and allow your dog to go to there to feel safe, put on some music or the TV to help mask the noise outside, and distract your dog with games and food.

Dogs who panic can choke themselves on a collar or lead, so never tether your dog during these times and never use a choke chain to restrain your dog.

Make sure your dog is micro-chipped and that your contact details are up to date on the microchip register.

Also ensure they are wearing an ID tag so they can be easily returned if they accidentally escape.

Direct supervision is important to help prevent injury or escape. If you cannot supervise your dog on the night consider making alternative arrangements so your dog will be supervised by a responsible person directly or consider boarding your dog so they will be safe.