



In this edition! Page 1 - Firework advice | Page 2 - Arthritis awareness, Keeping small pets warm, Autumn hazards

How to keep your pet calm during firework season



As the nights draw in and we start to celebrate over fireworks and bonfires, we wanted to share a few tips to help keep your pet safe and calm.

Preparation is key

- Speak to your vet as early as possible about managing anxious pets and the season.
- Use the run-up period to familiarise your pet with dens or hiding spaces.
- Ensure your household is consistent in managing any stress your pet might have.

Provide a hiding place

- Provide a hideout area where your pet feels safe and won't be disturbed.
- Safe spaces include dens made by covering crates with a blanket, or allowing cats to hide under beds.
- Familiarise pets with these spaces two weeks before expected fireworks.

Make use of supportive products

- Speak to your vet about managing your pet's anxiety, as there are supportive products and medications available.

Keep pets indoors

- Bring cats and dogs inside just before dark.
- Encourage dogs to go to the toilet before fireworks start so that they can then remain indoors once fireworks start.
- Stressed pets should not be left home alone.

Keep things quiet and secure

- Close windows and curtains at dusk.
- Keep lights on and create background noise by playing music or having the television on.
- Moderately loud rhythmic music with a good beat can help to mask fireworks.

Secure escape routes

- Stressed pets can behave in unexpected and unpredictable ways.
- Ensure your home is secure before fireworks start, so they don't bolt through open doors or windows.
- Microchipping ensures any escaped or missing pets can be traced back to you and is a legal requirement for dogs and cats.

Find ways to help your pet

- Be aware of your own behaviour, as certain behavioural cues may worsen a pet's anxiety.
- Respond in a calm and passive way, be present, but keep your own behaviour as relaxed as possible.

Distract your furry friend

- If it's not too distressing, try playing with or training pets with puzzle feeders or treat-dispensing toys.
- Some pets may be too stressed, so don't force it if they seem reluctant.

Plan for the future

- If your pet struggles with stress, think ahead and plan long-term.
- Anxious pets often benefit from year-round desensitisation training.
- Contact your vet or a registered pet behaviourist for further support, and try resources like Dogs Trust's sound therapy tools.



Could your dog or cat have arthritis?

Arthritis is a common cause of chronic pain in cats and dogs, and can frequently affect older pets, causing degeneration and inflammation of the joints.

Signs are not usually noticeable until the degeneration is quite advanced and are easily missed initially. Each individual pet will show different indicators, and some may not show them all.

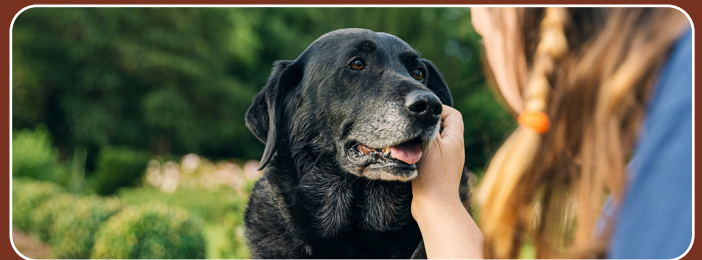
Common signs include:

- Slowing down on walks, or less willingness to walk
- Reluctance to jump or difficulty with stairs.
- A physical limp or stiffness.
- Pacing, changes in behaviour, or low mood.
- Licking or chewing joints.
- Muscle loss, especially around the back end.
- Reduced or increased grooming.
- Loss of toilet training, such as soiling outside the litterbox.

Many treatments for arthritis are available, and each pet may respond better to some treatments than others, so talk to your vet to find the best combination for your pet's health situation.

It may take some time to find what works for your pet, and as the disease progresses more treatments may need to be added to keep them comfortable.

Unfortunately, arthritis cannot be cured and is progressive. But working closely with your vet to find the right combination of treatments, and attending regular check-ups, can provide your pet with many years of active life.



Housing rabbits and guinea pigs in cold weather

It's important to make sure that we keep our pets warm and dry in the colder months, especially if you usually keep your rabbit or guinea pig outside. Here are our top tips for housing rabbits and guinea pigs safely during winter:

- Housing should ideally have some shelter from the weather, such as run covers that can be used to keep the rain off your pet's home. This may mean moving their house to a more sheltered part of your garden.
- During the colder months, make sure drinking water doesn't freeze, and provide lots of bedding and fibrous food.

- It is important to cover any housing with a blanket or quilt and waterproof materials when temperatures drop - while also leaving space for ventilation.
- Where possible, you should also consider between-wall insulation for rabbit and guinea pig housing to prevent extreme fluctuations in temperature.
- In extreme weather conditions, you should also consider bringing pets indoors.

For more information, please contact the practice.



Autumn hazards

While it's great to take your dog out for a lovely autumn walk, it's also vital to ensure that they don't eat anything poisonous. If your canine friend ingests any acorns, oak leaves, conkers or rotting fruit, fast action must be taken, as these are all very poisonous for our pets.

If your dog shows any signs of poisoning, which may include vomiting, diarrhoea, tummy pain, increased thirst, excessive drooling or tremors, or you know they've eaten something they shouldn't, please contact the practice immediately. Delayed treatment can lead to serious illness (such as liver and kidney damage), so you must act quickly if you know or suspect your dog has eaten anything they shouldn't have.

We also need to consider making our pets as visible as possible

to others when out and about on darker early mornings or evenings. Reflective collars are useful for cats, but make sure they are quick release to prevent your cat getting stuck or sustaining a collar injury.

For dogs, reflective or light up collars, harnesses, leads, coats or vests are a good idea to ensure they are as visible as possible to drivers and other road users. Consider a bright or reflective coat for yourself, and if you are going for walks in badly lit areas, a head torch can be useful for staying on the path and when poop scooping!

For further advice on staying safe this autumn, please reach out to the practice.

This newsletter is provided as an education service to our clients. All news and other items in this newsletter are for information only and should not be treated as a substitute for veterinary advice.