

Halting Fireworks Fears

Get advice on preventing pets from panicking during Fourth of July celebrations.

The spectacle of sights and sounds during Independence Day celebrations will captivate millions of Americans this year, but unfortunately, the holiday activities can cause severe stress to furry and feathered loved ones. Many pets find themselves injured or homeless after attempting to escape the booming Fourth of July fireworks. Animal shelters see an influx of homeless and injured pets during the Fourth of July holiday, but PETCO Animal Supplies offers some tips to keep owners and companion animals happy and healthy during this year's celebrations. Animals, particularly dogs, have been known to break chains and leashes and run through or jump over fences to escape frightening noises; not only can they become lost, but many injure themselves severely. Keeping your pets indoors during the Fourth of July is the best way to help your animal feel protected and reduce stress levels, said PETCO's director of veterinary medicine, Tom Edling DVM., MSpVM. The clamor fireworks produce can cause tremendous anxiety in dogs, cats and horses. Pets can hurt themselves, become nauseated, hide and even destroy property as a result of increased anxiety. To help pets relax, keep them in a calm, quiet place, away from windows and screen doors. Playing music or leaving the TV on can help drown out loud noises and the familiar sound may help calm pets. Consider giving your pet a new toy or treat to keep them occupied and distract them from the commotion outside. A mild sedative can also help take the edge off an otherwise frightening experience for many animals. Pet parents may want to consider a sedative for their pet if they have a history of increased anxiety due to loud noises. Parents should always work with their veterinarian to determine an appropriate sedative, Edling said. Also, always make sure that your pet wears identification and a properly fitting collar, in case they become lost or disoriented. As you and your family plan for picnics, barbecues and fireworks, remember to prepare your pet for the big day. Arrange to feed and walk your companion animals well in advance of your Independence Day festivities. Posted: July 1, 2006, 5:00 a.m. EST