

K9INTUITION

BEHAVIOUR ADVICE
FIREWORKS



THE BEST PAW FORWARD
FOR YOUR DOG!

Obviously with fireworks we are not just dealing with the noise but also the visual thing of the flashes etc. and also the smell of the burning. When it comes to the visual signals of fireworks which may play a part in upsetting a dog as well, make sure that all curtains are closed to minimise flashing and build a 'den area' for your dog. If your dog is already familiar with a crate and likes being in the crate - then make use of this as his 'den'. This den should be built well in advance of the firework season so as to allow your dog to become accustomed to going in and out of it, associating it with pleasant feelings. Perhaps he could be fed in there/have favourite toys/plenty of blankets to burrow in if he likes. The den should be covered over thus minimising the effects of flashes and also to help muffle the noises.



There are sound CDs which can be purchased on line/in pet stores/in vets and also apps on your phone which contain all manner of every day household noises but also other, scary noises like gun shot and fireworks, thunder and so on. This cd/app can be used to help to desensitise your dog to the sound of fireworks (and anything else) but it will take a considerable length of time and patience. Hence why you should start this process MONTHS before the main firework season.

You should begin by playing the cd/app at it's lowest volume (remember how much more sensitive a dog's hearing is compared to ours) so that you can only just hear it and no more and your dog is not showing any signs of anxiety. Play with your dog, distract him in some way whilst the cd/app is playing and only play the cd/app for a few minutes at a time but do it several times a day. Mix up what you do with your dog while the cd/app is playing and do not do the same thing each time. We want to build up the association of scary noises = good fun and nice things happen. Keep the volume level the same, all the time being sure that he is not reacting to it at all, before trying to up the volume ever so slightly. Again your dog must not show any signs of anxiety towards the noises.

At no point should your dog be left alone when the cd/app is being played as if he regresses you would not be aware of what happened to cause that. Build the volume level up very slowly and steadily over a period of weeks (in some dog's case this could even take months) playing the cd/app several times a day for short bursts until it is quite loud and he is not bothering with it at all. If at any time your dog shows anxious behaviour towards the noises from the cd/app, stop immediately for that period and the next time make sure that the volume level of the cd is back to the previous level where your dog was happy and relaxed.





It may also be useful to play music in the background simultaneously with the scary noise cd. This way you can play similar music on the nights of the fireworks to help mask the sounds. There are music CDs/apps available which have been specifically developed on the idea of psychoacoustics whereby the music is arranged in particular rhythmical patterns to having a calming influence over a dog.

A Thunder shirt can be a useful item in your arsenal for a dogs noise sensitivity .This is a vest type garment that applies constant but gentle pressure on the dog which is reputed to have a calming effect. Also using an Adaptil collar and Pet Remedy products will help too.

In extreme cases of a dog being frightened by fireworks, there are prescription medications which can be very affective. You will need to make an appointment to see your vet to have your dog examined and to discuss medication. Veterinary surgeons are the only people who can prescribe prescription drugs for an animal.

It used to be thought that to attempt to comfort a dog when they were showing fear of something would actually make the situation worse, in that you would be rewarding a dog for showing fearful behaviour. The most recent research tells us this is **not** the case. You simply cannot reinforce fear - it is too aversive an emotion. Yes, emotions are contagious, so if you want your dog to be afraid of fireworks, be afraid yourself. But calmly, quietly and SLOWLY stroking him and reassuring him when he shows fear of fireworks will not make him more afraid of them. The bad news it that it won't actually help that much either but if you look back at the 'massage' section in the emotions/anxiety handout you will see the beneficial effects. However, as we all feel better ourselves when we are doing something nice/positive for our dogs - this **will** have a positive effect on your dog - as he can easily pick up on your emotional state and be affected by it!

*For further advice about helping your dog to cope with fireworks or if you are experiencing any behavioural difficulties with your puppy or adult dog from anxieties to aggression - humping to house training - barking to biting and MANY more.....contact Mary at **K9INTUITION** for help and advice at k9intuitionworks@gmail.com or visit the website www.k9intuition.works*

