



## Helping pets cope with fireworks & thunderstorms

New Year's day, Australia day, Territory Day and the Wet Season are some of the busiest times of the year for RSPCA shelters, as we care for dogs who have run away from the frightening sound of fireworks.

If your pet is frightened by fireworks or loud noises, try these tips to help reduce its anxiety and keep it safe over the holidays:

1. **The art of distraction:** if your dog shows subtle signs of anxiety, distract it by playing a game using an engaging toy. Playing music or having a TV on may help to muffle the sound of fireworks and serve to distract the pet. Used frequently, you may find distraction will delay your dog's anxious response.
2. **Create a safe house:** If your dog hides in response to loud noises, give it access to this hiding spot, even if it is under the table or the bed. If your dog attempts to get inside when frightened, consider installing a dog door.
3. **Gradual exposure:** CDs of frightening noises are available from various Vet Clinics and Pet Stores or online. Gradually exposing your dog to loud noises may in time, reduce its anxiety.
4. If you have a pet that becomes frightened or anxious from loud noises, it is best to keep it indoors in a secure place during fireworks. Your yard may not be as secure as you think. It is common for frightened animals that would not normally escape from their yard to find a way out. If your pet is not normally kept indoors, consider making a safe and cosy spot for it in the laundry room or garage.

Horses are also particularly vulnerable when exposed to fireworks. Horses can become terrified at the sound of fireworks and their initial reaction is to escape the noise and seek a secure and safe area. Whether the horse is in a yard or paddock, it may become distressed and do anything to seek a secure area.

If you are worried about how your pets may react to fireworks these holidays, try to find out where local events will be staged over the New Year evening. Contact your local council and check your local paper to confirm festivities. Preparing your pets for the event could be the key to keeping them safe these holidays.

For additional advice on this or other behavioural issues, please visit your local vet or dog training facility.

Reuniting you with your lost pet will be made a lot easier if your pet's contact details are up to date. Please ensure that your animal has the following identification:

1. **Microchip**
2. **Council registration**
3. **Collar / ID tag with phone number**

**Not only is it important that your animal has these identifications, but it is vital that you ensure these details have all your current contact information so that we can reunite you with your animal.**