

How to keep your dog safe on the Fourth of July



Ahhh, the Fourth of July is just around the corner. It's a great day to celebrate with family and friends. Patriotic colors, celebration, barbecue, and fireworks!!! While we might be having fun on this American holiday, we may have a dog who is less in a mood for celebration.

Did you know that more pets are lost on July Fourth than any other day of the year? Some dogs are spooked by the loud whizzes and bright bangs caused by fireworks. Those that aren't secured indoors end up bolting in fear, winding up lost or injured. The Animal Poison Control Center (APCC) sees an increase in calls concerning pets who have ingested fireworks or are having issues with the loud noises of fireworks.

Have you been thinking about consulting with a professional to get your dog the help he needs, but life intervened? While desensitization and counter-conditioning under the guidance of a qualified professional is the only route to help your dog, here's a survival guide to "manage" the situation and keep our companion-dogs safe:

1. Make sure your dog is wearing his collar and is microchipped.

Make sure to keep the dog's collar on with your contact information and ensure that your contact information, address, et cetera is accurate. Verify that the collar/harness fits well and the dog can't wiggle out of it. I'd take him out on the leash to do his business. Ensure that his business is taken care of before the fireworks begin. Also take a current photo of your dog.

2. Keep him indoors at home.

Instead of bringing him to your neighbor's barbecue, or to the fireworks display -- Keep him indoors. Diesel feels safe and happier at home with all his stuffed Kong in his "safe spot - his crate". Familiar environment is much more comforting. Keep your dog inside your house instead of the yard to avoid him escaping over a fence. Double check that your doors and gates are secure, because scared dogs may do whatever they can -- to escape.

3. Create a safe place & mask the sights and sounds.

Create a safe place (if there isn't already one) -- any bedroom where your dog normally likes hanging out with you, the basement or his crate. The lights from the fireworks can also be scary to you dog. Close the curtains. If your dog is crate trained, you can put him the crate with a blanket over it to block out the flashes of light. Play classical music or use a white noise machine to mask the sounds. If you don't have any of those, sometimes the AC machine, a fan, or even the TV or washer/dryer can help! Comfort your dog in whatever way it helps your dog: cuddle time, lap time, car ride away from the sounds, stuffed Kong or a yummy chew toy.

4. Remember! Exercise is not a quick-fix for all the problems.

"A tired dog is a good dog!" but an anxious or scared dog has bigger fish to fry even though you exercise him enough.



5. Give him yummy food or his favorite toy during fireworks.

Have a party with special treats every time the fireworks go off, if your dog is emotionally okay taking food. You can also hold-off his food all day and feed him a special dinner. This at the moment, is just management. It may help desensitize him to fireworks in the long run (however keep in mind that this takes months, if not years, of training). Diesel and Henry get their special frozen Kong filled with Sardines and Pumpkin only on the Fourth of July. Remember that it is perfectly normal for dogs to be scared of fireworks, and remain relaxed and calm. Dogs often look to us for reassurance, and if you make a big deal and fuss over him, your pet may think that there was a valid reason to panic.

The goal is to do everything we can to keep our dogs physically, emotionally and mentally in the safe zone. We hope you have a safe and fun Fourth of July celebration!