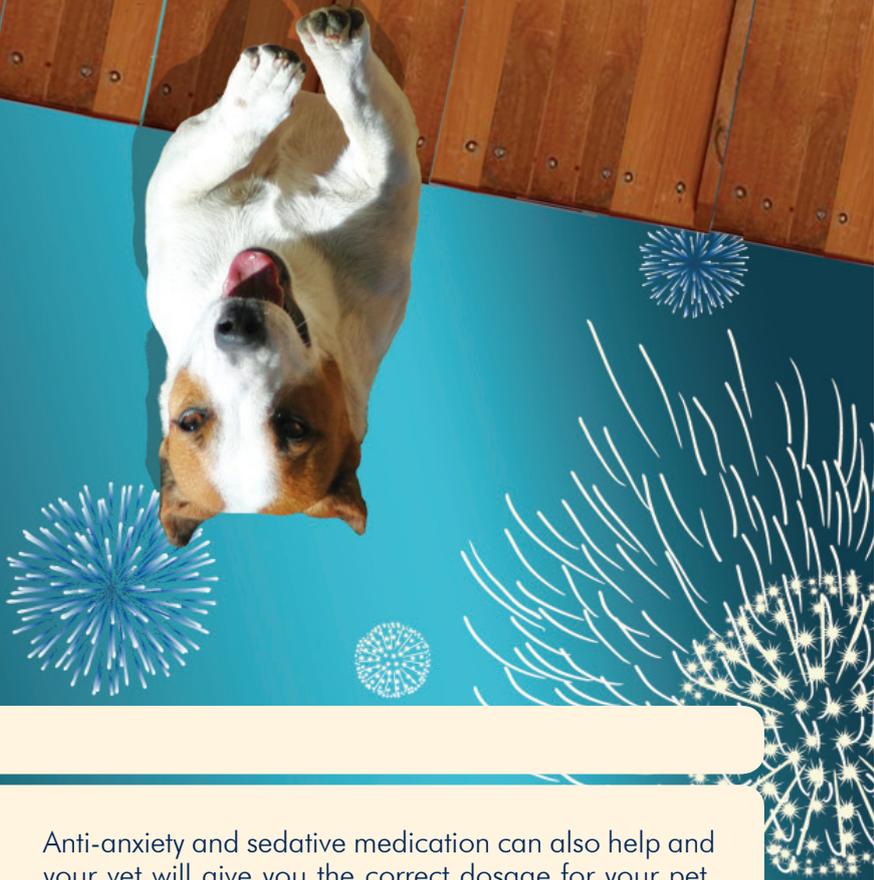




Prepare in advance!

PET SAFETY Fireworks Displays



For severely anxious pets

If your pet becomes extremely anxious around loud noises, you should immediately begin desensitisation training or visit your vet to discuss medication options.

Desensitisation training is a worthwhile investment of your time; visit www.rspcavic.org.au and look under 'Animal Care', then 'Fireworks' for more information.

Anti-anxiety and sedative medication can also help and your vet will give you the correct dosage for your pet.

Contact your local council and check your local paper to find out where and when local festivities, particularly fireworks are planned. Some councils permit fireworks at Christmas festivals in addition to New Years Eve so you may need to schedule your visit to the vet before Christmas.



For additional advice, please visit your local vet or contact the RSPCA Animal Behaviour and Training Co-ordinator on phone 03 9224 2211.

Alternatively attend an RSPCA Scary Sounds pet information session to help your pet cope with fireworks; call the number below for bookings and details.

www.rspcavic.org | (03) 9224 2222



The following information is appropriate for domestic pets, especially cats and dogs but may be useful for other domestic animals too.
Eliminating pet anxiety, phobia of fireworks or loud noises is not easy but through a combination of desensitisation, distraction, providing a comforting environment and where needed medication, you should be able to reduce your pet's anxiety and keep your pet safe.

New Year's Day and Australia Day are the busiest times of year for RSPCA shelters, as we care for pets that have run away from the frightening sound of fireworks.
You need to care for your pet over the holiday period when fireworks are prominent around Christmas time, New Year's Eve and Australia Day. Even if your pet has not previously shown any signs of distress at loud noises or fireworks, it is important to secure your pet as animals can get an unexpected fright or become more sensitive as they get older.

Caring for your pet during fireworks





PET SAFETY: Fireworks Displays

Essential advice

- Ensure your pet's microchip and council registration details are up-to-date, and that your pet is always wearing a collar/ID tag with your current phone number.
- Keep your pet in a secure indoor area during fireworks and thunderstorms. A laundry or garage is good if you have an outdoor pet.
- Create a hideout for your pet in a quiet room with as few windows as possible.
- Cover any windows in this room to further block out noise and to block out flashes of lightening or fireworks.
- Create a bed from blankets for burrowing and put an unwashed tracksuit or a similar item in the room so that the pet has your scent; or prepare your pet's crate in a similar way.
- A few days before the fireworks, take your pet into the room/crate and give it treats on the blankets so that it gets comfortable being in the room.
- If you are expecting fireworks, take your dog for a walk in the early afternoon to wear it out.
- Have food available such as kongs, bones, treatballs and long-lasting treats. Extended chewing will help calm dogs and stimulation will distract them.
- Put on moderately loud music or a TV to muffle loud outside noises and to distract your pet. A small battery operated radio maybe a safe way to incorporate noise.

If you have the time, it can be worthwhile to desensitise your pet. For more information, visit the fireworks section under Animal care on our website www.rspcavic.org.

If you cannot be home

If you cannot be home, lock the pet in the hideout/safe room or crate that you have prepared. This will minimise the chance of your pet injuring itself or escaping if it becomes distressed.

- Ensure there is plenty of water and some food in the room/crate.
- Take your dog to the toilet before locking it up, or if you have a cat, remember to put kitty litter in the room.
- **Beware:** if you are leaving the pet unattended and it becomes anxious, it may behave erratically so ensure there are no dangerous items that the pet could chew on or knock. Cables and any breakables should be removed. Make sure your pet cannot escape.
- If medicating your pet, follow the dosage instructions exactly and medicate before anxiety sets in. Discuss your plans with your vet.
- Return home as quickly as possible to check on your pet and take it to the toilet after the noises have subsided, keeping it on a leash when you do in case it is still upset or becomes spooked.
- Do not punish your pet for any damage/bad behaviour on your return; being fearful is an emotional/instinctual response which an animal cannot control.

If you are home when the fireworks start

During fireworks, the best thing you can do for your pet is to provide it with a safe and comforting environment and give it no further reason to be fearful.

- If medicating your pet, remember to do so before any anxiety sets in. Ensure you follow the dosage instructions that your vet has given you, and work out a plan to get your pet to consume the medication in the most normal or least stressful way possible (such as hiding it in its dinner).
- Before the fireworks start, take your pet into the safe room/crate and scatter some treats/a bone to keep it distracted and happy to be in the room. It is probably advisable to allow your pet to exit and enter this room freely if it is accustomed to roaming freely around the house.
- When the fireworks start, continue with normal activities and keep your voice in a typical tone; this will give your pet no reason to think that there may be something worrying or unusual about the situation.
- If your pet becomes anxious, do not change your behaviour or voice, only maintain your normal behaviours with the pet.
- Do not punish your pet for any damage/bad behaviour on your return; being fearful is an emotional/instinctual response which an animal cannot control.

 **For severely anxious pets see overleaf for additional info.**

