

**Damory Veterinary  
Clinic**

Damory Lodge  
Edward Street  
Blandford Forum  
Dorset  
DT11 7QT

Tel. 01258 452626

# Damory Veterinary Clinic

## Small Animal Factsheet



### FIREWORKS AND YOUR PET

**FEAR** is a normal emotion which helps protect us from harm. It is perfectly normal to experience fear when presented with something potentially harmful, but can become problematic when the object, person or situation that causes the fear is perfectly harmless.

In contrast to fear, a **PHOBIA** does nothing to help an animal to survive. It is not an adaptive state, and instead of ensuring the safety of an individual, it can be stressful, irrational and crippling. A phobia can also be highly detrimental to the animal's quality of life by severely limiting its ability to engage in everyday life.

Pets commonly develop phobias of sudden, sharp, loud noises...**FIREWORKS** being the most common.

#### **PLANNING AHEAD**

Preparing your pet for any sudden loud noises should be part of the socialisation and training process. The aim is to make these sounds as 'normal' to your pet as possible, and if possible for the animal to associate loud noises with positive feelings and relaxation. Exposure to these sounds early in life will make it less likely for your pet to develop a phobia when subjected to such sounds later in life.

There are a few actions that you can put in place prior to a period of high noise level ( i.e. fireworks season):

- Create a **REFUGE** for your pet. Pick an area where you feel your pet will be happiest and provide a comfortable bed. You could even insulate the area, draping blankets over to protect further against flashes of light and noise.
- Install an **ADAPTIL DIFFUSER** as close to the refuge as possible a few weeks before the event. It is a plug in diffuser which continuously emits an odour-less pheromone which makes your dog feel relaxed. Feliway is an equivalent product for cats. We stock both here at Damory.
- Ensure that your pet is **MICROCHIPPED** as a scared animal can easily get lost.

#### **IMMEDIATE ACTIONS**

During the fireworks/noisy period, there are a number of things you can do straight away to ease your pet's anxiety:

Take your pet to their **REFUGE** with a favourite toy for comfort.

Close **WINDOWS AND CURTAINS** to block out as much external noise as possible.

Turn on the **TV OR RADIO** a little louder than normal to disguise the noise.

A few hours before the expected noise **FEED** your pet so that they feel calm and sleepy.

**REMAIN CALM** and **IGNORE** all nervous behaviour. Do not get angry or impatient with them.

**DISTRACT** your pet with games.

### **MEDICAL THERAPY**

Medication may be required if animals fail to respond to these actions. Some of the medications will require a check over with a vet:

**DIAZAPAM** is a short term anxiolytic which can be given 30-60 minutes before the expected noise.

**ALPRAZOLAM** is a short-term anxiolytic which inhibits a pet's memory. It works best if given 30 minutes before a fear-inducing event.

**ZYLKENE** is a natural product made from milk protein which mimics Valium's effect. It is a once daily treatment but must be started 1 – 2 days before required.

**SKULLCAP AND VALERIAN** is a licensed herbal medicine for the symptomatic relief of anxiety, nervousness and excitability. Severely affected animals will benefit from being started on the tablets 3-4 weeks before the event. Starting 10 days before fireworks should be sufficient for less severely affected animals.

### **BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY**

This treatment combines **DESENSITISATION** (reducing the pets' response to a fear-inducing stimulus) and **COUNTER CONDITIONING** (associating the stimulus with something positive, such as feeding or playing). This therapy should be started at a time of year when no fear-inducing noise stimulus is expected, as the noise could reverse any positive effects. At Damory we have a selection of Desensitisation CDs to help with this type of therapy, which are available on loan. We simply ask for £5.00 deposit which you will receive back on return of the DVD.

If you need any further advice on helping your pet with a phobia of fireworks, don't hesitate to contact us at the practice.