



Fireworks!

There are plenty of things you can do to reduce the stress the fireworks can cause your dog.

If your dog suffers, your first port of call should be to speak to your vet. Vets can recommend and prescribe a wide range of suitable medications and with so many coming to market to target noise sensitivity specifically, it is certainly a direction worth talking through.

Walk and feed your dog before dark. This will help to physically satiate them so they are more relaxed. This should reduce the chance of fireworks going off when you are out walking and spooking your dog or while they are eating which may mean they leave their food and go hungry.

Offer your dog a safe place to rest, watch where they choose to hide if they do go hiding and make this spot comfortable by placing blankets in the area, and if it is open topped, try to put a blanket or duvet cover over the top to enclose the space. Remember this is individual to your dog, so if your dog doesn't like enclosed spaces don't enclose the area more than it already is.

Practice closing the windows, curtains or blinds as soon as it gets dark, rather than only when you hear fireworks. Dogs generalise fear and you may find that in future your dog becomes nervous when you close the curtains. Doing this now means the curtains will do their job in blocking out some of the noise and most of the flash from the fireworks.

Turn the 'big lights' on in the house to reduce the light from the flashes, while dogs do settle better in low light rooms, some dogs are frightened by the flashes. This is a case of trial and error.

Play music - Classical and Reggae have been shown to reduce stress in dogs. Reggae offers a beat that is soothing, where the energy in some classical music may help disguise bangs.

Look into TTouch half wrap or calming coats. This works a little like acupuncture and can help some dogs feel more comfortable.

Say cheese! If your dog is able to eat when fireworks are going off simply say "cheese" directly after you hear a bang and throw a piece or two of cheese onto the floor. It's important that the cheese comes after a bang and is repeated after as many bangs as possible. For dogs that are able to eat, we are teaching them that bangs predict good things. Don't pressure your dog to eat, a positive thing can be negative if forced upon you.

Don't ignore your dog! Once upon a time it was thought that fussing your dog when they are scared would reward them for being scared therefore increasing the fear. You can't reward fear, it's a contradiction in terms. Gentle calm fuss (as you would any other time your dog comes to you worried about something) is perfectly fine. Let them be with you, comfort them, they may not want fuss but instead just to be close to you - that's fine, just be there.

Stay calm and quiet, there's a fine line between comforting and sounding worried yourself. How would you act if the bin lorry went past? Channel that. It's exceptionally hard to see your dog scared and worried, your feelings are important too. Having a plan of action often helps us feel more centred.