Dogs Trust’s position on fireworks

For many dogs and their owners, firework season is one they will be dreading. A Dogs Trust survey1 of 3,750 pet owners found that two-thirds of dogs are worried by fireworks and that 93% of their owners alter their routine during fireworks celebrations to try to minimise the trauma on their pets.

Current Fireworks Legislation

Usage

Fireworks can be set off by any adult between 7.00am and 11.00pm every day of the year, except for:

- Bonfire Night, when the cut off is extended until midnight
- New Year’s Eve, Diwali and Chinese New Year, when the cut off is extended until 1am

It is illegal to let fireworks off in the street or a public place. Fireworks should only be let off on private land, such as a garden, or on land where the landowner’s permission has been given. It is not a legal requirement to have any form of licence or training to let off consumer fireworks. However for public displays which are insured, some form of training may be a requirement of the underwriters.

Sale

Fireworks can only be sold to persons aged 18 years or older. Sparklers are classed as fireworks.

Fireworks can be sold at any time of the year, however the retailer must hold a valid licence. There are two licences available to retailers: one covers the period around Guy Fawkes and New Year’s Eve, the other covers a full year.

Problems

Easy access to fireworks means dog owners are facing a constant waiting game when it comes to loud noises and scared pets.

Whilst restrictions are already placed on the use of fireworks, these are impossible to enforce effectively.

- Petition 109702 calls for restrictions on the public use of fireworks to the celebration days listed above, but we feel these restrictions will face the same difficulties as the current ones in terms of enforceability.

Dogs Trust Position

Dogs Trust is supportive of introducing further restrictions around the sale of fireworks, limiting them to licensed, public occasions at certain times of the year.

We also recommend that local authorities should take the location of public displays into consideration when granting them a licence and require that they are well publicised in the surrounding area.

Dogs Trust Action

We suggest it is important that owners take preventative measures to prepare their dogs for the noise of fireworks. Dogs Trust works with vets Sarah Heath and Jon Bowen, and together we offer a free sound based treatment programme, The Sounds Scary Audio Therapy Programme², which prepares dogs for distressing noises, such as fireworks, by playing specific noises to enable dogs to get used to the sounds and cope better.

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¹ Dogs Trust and Cats Protection online Survey Monkey Survey of 3,750 respondents in May/June 2014
² https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice/dog-behaviour-health/sound-therapy-for-pets