

Fireworks' Night

November 5th: loud screeches, pretty bright lights, almighty bangs, an enjoyable night for all, or so you'd think? For many dog owners fireworks night is the one night of the year that they have come to dread. For their dogs, it's the worst night imaginable.

More dogs than you'd think suffer from an enormous amount of stress on firework night, normally due to a learned fear. Some behaviors that may be seen are:

- Barking incessantly,
- Running away, hiding under chairs and tables
- Shaking and trembling
- Pawing at their owner for reassurance
- Escaping

Unfortunately as humans it is instinctive to want to reassure and comfort our loved ones when they are distressed and through speech and affection we are able to do just that. However in the dog world it doesn't quite work that way. When a dog receives a cuddle or a stroke they normally perceive it as a reward and whenever you reward a dog for a behaviour you are increasing the likelihood of them displaying that behaviour again in the future. So as natural as it is for us to do, if we reassure our dogs when they are scared we are actually rewarding them, and making their fear worse. So please don't sit and cuddle your puppy on the sofa for two hours through the duration of the fireworks. Your puppy's first experience can dictate how they cope with fireworks in future years so it is vital you get it right first time around.

What to do?

Your reaction is the most important.

- Ignore any signs of fear!
- Act as you would on any other Wednesday evening. If you are acting differently it will add to any stress; pull the curtains and put the T.V. on
- Give your puppy something positive to do e.g. play a game, do some training with tasty tit bits, or fill an interactive toy such as a Kong

Above are some pointers of how to make sure your puppy's first experience of fireworks is a pleasant one to prevent them developing any fear. However if you know your dog already suffers from a fear of fireworks it is advisable to seek professional help from a behaviour specialist as soon as possible.

See [Alpha Shop](#) for "Firework Fear" by Pam Mackinnon