



Dogs And Fireworks

The 4th of July is coming up and the issue of fireworks and reactive pets is a topic of conversation and a source of anxiety for many pet owners. Fireworks are not new, and people have had dogs for centuries. So, what has changed? Why so many scared dogs? From my vantage point as a third-generation professional animal trainer, I believe it is how we are dealing with our animals in a very emotional way. We also tend to lower the bar in our training. For me, the answer always lies in training a great foundation, being very practical, setting a high bar, and leadership.

While most professionals are talking about sedation/anxiety meds and thunder vests, I defer to a solid training program.

Getting Started...

- Start with a foundation training program. Whether you have a puppy, older dog, or even a rescue. Yes, you can teach an old dog new tricks!
- Train/role play/practice these scary things prior to the event. Use YouTube to play fireworks sounds and thunderstorms,
- Your body language/attitude is crucial... Be very matter of fact. Employ strong positive energy and body language. Do NOT be reactive or nervous, or talk in a high soft voice to calm down your animal. They are looking for leadership!

On the day of the fireworks (or before a big storm later in the day)...

- Get a good workout with your animal. It will be beneficial to both of you if you expend some energy.
- Distract your dog during the noise with treats, lick mats, playing fetch, etc.
- Utilize music or TV to drown out the noise and distract you and your dog.
- Put your dog in their kennel if they are kennel trained and find it a comfortable place,
- If your dog is not in the kennel, put a leash on them so they do not scurry around.
- Just to be safe, secure your doors and windows; anywhere a really nervous dog or cat can escape.

NOTE: the 4th of July timeframe sees more pets escape than any other time of the year!

Training: For dogs, I highly recommend the **AKC Canine Good Citizen**

<https://www.akc.org/.../training.../canine-good-citizen/>

By ensuring that your animal has a solid foundation, a very 'matter of fact' vs emotional human, spending the time to imprint a young animal, and role playing prior to real events, you will no doubt find you have a much calmer animal. This should also help with separation anxiety, disrespect, and other issues as well. That is a win-win for sure!

I challenge you to try this approach, and would love to hear from you if this helped out! Read the full article at <https://heidiherriott.com/dog-training>

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