

Keeping your pets safe, happy during Fourth of July

By Lisa Bloch

Even in Marin, where fireworks are illegal, you can already hear people setting them off ahead of the Fourth of July holiday. The sights — and especially the sounds — of Fourth of July celebrations can be terrifying to animals. Loud noises can scare pets, causing them to panic and even run away from home. In fact, animal shelters across the country report an increased number of lost pets after fireworks displays, and Marin County is no exception.

Fortunately, there are steps you can take to ensure a fun and safe holiday for you and your furry family members.

Always

- Keep your pets indoors during fireworks displays. A quiet, sheltered area is best. Close windows and curtains and turn on the TV or radio to help drown out the noise. Some animals can become destructive when frightened, so be sure to remove any items that your pet could destroy or that would be harmful if chewed. Some animals even feel more comfortable in the bathroom, as the small space will buffer the sound better.
- Make sure your fur buddies are microchipped and wearing identification so if they do become lost, you can be reunited with them quickly. All dogs in Marin County are required by law to be licensed. A license not only gets a wayward pup home faster, it shows they're up-to-date on their rabies vaccines. Keep current photos of your pets handy — and make sure the photos show any unique markings.

Never

- Never take your dog to a fireworks display. It's usually hot, there are large crowds, and it's, of course, loud for sensitive ears.
- Never leave pets outside unattended, even in a fenced yard or on a tether. Pets that normally wouldn't try to leave the yard may panic and try to escape. Dogs may become entangled in their tethers or even hang themselves if they try to leap over a fence. To avoid injury, keep your pets indoors.

Other ways to help

- If you know your pet gets seriously stressed by the sounds of fireworks, consult your veterinarian. They may recommend a fast-acting anti-anxiety medication. The key is to give the medications before the noise starts; they are less effective if you wait until the dog is already

stressed. You may also need to give an additional dose later, depending on the duration of the noise.

- Some dogs respond well to the use of a dog anxiety vest sometimes known as a ThunderShirt. It applies gentle, constant pressure to calm anxiety, fear, and overexcitement and can be particularly useful during fireworks.
- If, despite your best efforts, your pet does become lost, don't panic. Check inside garages, yards, storage sheds, basements, closets, under cars, and in the shrubbery at your home and throughout the neighborhood. Post on Nextdoor, Facebook, and, of course, contact Marin Humane so we can help you in finding your lost buddy.

Each year, we receive several lost pet reports during Fourth of July celebrations. If your pet becomes lost, contact Marin Humane at 415-883-4621. If it's after-hours, you can follow the prompts to reach the officer on duty. Also, go to marinhumane.org and check our lost pets section, and fill out a lost pet report. You can download lost animal flyers from our website and check our 24-hour lost animal hotline at 415-883-4621.

Have a great time this Fourth of July and keep your pets safe and sound!

Lisa Bloch is the marketing and communications director for Marin Humane, which contributes Tails of Marin articles and welcomes animal-related questions and stories about the people and animals in our community. Go to marinhumane.org, find us on social media @marinhumane, or email lbloch@marinhumane.org.