

Every dog has its day, but it's not the Fourth of July

July 3 2019, by Christine Calder



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

The Fourth of July can be a miserable day for dogs. The fireworks make scaredy-cats out of many canines.

That's because [dogs](#), like humans, are [hardwired to be afraid](#) of sudden, loud noises. It is what keeps them safe. Some dogs, though, take that fear

to the extreme with panting, howling, pacing, whining, hiding, trembling and even self-injury or escape. And, unlike humans, they don't know that the fanfare on the Fourth is not a threat. Dogs hear the fireworks and process it as if their world is under siege.

How a dog responds to noises [may be influenced by breed](#), with German shepherd dogs more likely to pace, while border collies or Australian cattle dogs are more likely to show their fear by hiding.

While we veterinarians don't know exactly why some dogs are afraid of fireworks and others not, many dogs that react to one noise often react to others. Therefore, [early intervention](#) and treatment are essential in protecting the welfare of these terrified dogs. Here's how you can protect your dog from fireworks.

- Take your pet to the vet. If your dog is afraid of [fireworks](#), the first step is to have your veterinarian evaluate him or her, especially if your dog's noise sensitivity is relatively new. One [recent study](#) found a link between pain and noise sensitivities in older dogs, indicating that muscle tension or sudden movements in response to a [loud noise](#) may aggravate a tender area on the body and thus create an association between the loud noise and pain, causing fear of that particular noise to develop or escalate.
- Create a "safe haven" in your home with a secure door or gate, preferably away from outside windows or doors. Close the blinds or curtains to reduce outside noises, and play some [classical music](#) to help reduce stress by creating a relaxing environment for your dog during the show. A white noise machine or box fan may also help reduce anxiety, along with a pheromone like [Adaptil](#) sprayed on bedding, a bandanna, a collar or from a diffuser plugged into the wall.
- Consider noise-canceling headphones such as [Mutt Muffs](#) to muffle the sounds and further reduce noise sensitivities.

- Find a food your pet will love. This could be cut pieces of boiled chicken or squeeze cheese. Sit with your pet and feed him with each boom. You can also use a long-lasting food-dispensing or puzzle toy to release food continuously during the show. This is to help your dog make a positive association with the noises for the future.
- Consider [anxiety wraps](#), fabric wraps that exert a gentle pressure on your dog's body. These may help to lower [heart rate](#) and other clinical signs of [fear](#) and anxiety, operating on the belief that they swaddle a scared animal and thus calm its fears. These work best, however, in conjunction with a [complete behavior treatment plan](#) including medication or behavior modification, or both.
- When it comes to comforting your dog, the [jury is still out](#). It is difficult, however, to reinforce an emotional response with comfort. Therefore, it is OK to pet your dog when frightened by a [noise](#) event so long as the dog appears to be comforted and not more distressed by the attention.

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