



Summer is a time for vacations, barbecues, parties, swimming, and outdoor fun. However, it's important to remember several safety measures when bringing your pets along for summer activities. Whether swimming at the beach or keeping your pets cool in hot temperatures, here are some tips to keep your pets safe during the summer and avoid a trip to the emergency room.

Fireworks Safety

Editor's Note: These tips can also double for dealing with thunderstorms.



What would summer be without fireworks on July 4th? While the loud booms, crackles, and flashing lights delight us, your pet thinks otherwise! Some pets are not fazed by fireworks, while others panic as soon as they hear them.

Fireworks can be downright scary for your pet. Animals have a keen sense of hearing — four times more sensitive than ours — so what we hear at 20 feet, a dog can hear at 80 feet.

Also, pets don't understand the random sounds and lights caused by fireworks, so they perceive them as a threat. It's difficult to deal with noise phobias like fireworks and get your dog to stop being afraid of them because you can't create the stimulus to train them.

You can do a few things if your pet suffers from a fear of or aversion to loud noises.

Maintain a calm demeanor. Chances are, if you're cool as a cucumber, your dog will mimic you and calm down. A dog is intuitive and can sense fear or discomfort in humans, especially in their owners. If you're frightened or stressed out, your dog will see your reaction to the loud fireworks and assume that he should also react that way.

Additionally, don't change the way you speak to your pet. Sometimes, when we see our dogs afraid or stressed, the first thing we want to do is talk sympathetically to calm their nerves. Instead, maintain a matter-of-fact tone, as if nothing unusual is happening. Also, avoid saying "It's okay" and reassuring your pet that things are fine. Your positive manner will come across as praise (and you don't want to praise them for being scared).

Create a safe area for your pet. Put your dog's bed and favorite toys in a small room in your house and close any windows that may be open to muffle the noise. It also helps to block any outside light with shades or curtains. If your dog is crate-trained or enjoys sleeping in his crate, encourage your dog to go to his crate (he may just head there on his own). Turning up the volume on the TV and playing music are great distracting tools.

Sometimes, compression

clothing helps. If you want to avoid medication, try using a compression shirt or vest.

ThunderShirts are popular and available online. The pressure from the shirt helps release pheromones or hormones that are calming to your dog. Alternatively, you can swaddle your pet in a scarf or fabric bandage.

A tired dog is a calm dog. If you know when the fireworks display is starting (or when there's a storm approaching), it may help to take your dog out for a run or exercise to tire him out. Exercise reduces anxiety and stress, so he may be able to handle his fears more effectively when the first fireworks bang is heard.

Proper identification is a must. It is not uncommon for pets to run in a panic when they hear fireworks (or thunder). They instinctively want to hide when they feel unsafe, so proper identification is crucial in such a situation. Your dog's collar should include ID tags



Image courtesy of the Humane Society of Navarro County

with your name, your dog's name, and your phone number (some tags also have room for a location and/or address).

You can also buy a GPS tracking device for your dog. There are various trackers on the market (and they can be on the expensive side). Still, whenever your pup runs away, you can easily track him using your mobile phone.

Having your pet microchipped is a good idea, but it won't help if he runs away. Microchipping your pet is often misunderstood. **Microchipping is not a tracking device.** Getting your pet microchipped will only be useful if someone finds your lost pet and brings him to a veterinarian so they can scan the chip to find you, the owner. A microchip is useless if the dog is never seen by a human and brought to a veterinarian.

Feline friends get frightened, too! Cats can and do have noise phobias, though they are less common. Cats tend to hide when they are frightened. If you're at home and watching the fireworks, ensure you find your cat before the fireworks begin. If the cat is in a room with a door, close the door.

Watching fireworks in the summer can be enjoyable for humans but may be less pleasant for your pets.



Summer is the perfect time to spend with your family, including your pets. With a little planning and prevention, our four-legged friends can enjoy the outdoors and summer getaways right along with us while staying safe and healthy at the same time.