Fireworks prep checklist for dogs

barkwoo

Seven small steps for loud days

In one survey of dog owners, fireworks topped the list of noise fears, at about one dog in four.[1] In another survey, dogs whose owners fed them or played with them during the bangs tended to grow less afraid over time.[2] This plan teaches your dog that each bang brings a treat or a game. It takes weeks of practice, so start about six weeks before New Year's Eve and tick the steps off as you go.

1 Six weeks out

Talk to your vet if last year was hard

- [ ] If your dog panicked, tried to escape or took more than a day to recover, book a vet appointment now, well before December 30.
- [ ] Medication is a conversation for your vet, and it needs time.

2 Five weeks out

Build the den

- [ ] Pick the spot most protected from noise: an inside room with the curtains drawn works.
- [ ] Add a bed in a corner, a blanket that smells of home, and water.
- [ ] Make it the best place in the house: meals and chews there, door left open. Never use it for time-outs.

3 Four weeks out

Start sound practice at a whisper

- [ ] During dinner or a game, play a fireworks recording so quietly that your dog doesn't react.
- [ ] Raise the volume in small steps over days. Drop back if your dog stops eating, freezes or looks for the exit.

A trainer or vet can help you set the steps. Real fireworks also flash and shake the windows, which no recording can copy, so the recordings are only one part of the plan.

4 Three weeks out

Teach a settle on a mat

- [ ] Put a mat in the den. Reward your dog for lying on it, then for staying relaxed there a little longer each day.
- [ ] Practice in a quiet house first, then during the sound sessions.
- [ ] By New Year's Eve, "go to your mat" should be a request your dog knows well.

5 The week of

Check the escape routes

Frightened dogs bolt, on New Year's Eve and the Fourth of July alike.

- [ ] Fence and gates checked
- [ ] ID tag shows your current phone number
- [ ] Microchip details confirmed with the registry

6 On the day

Get ahead of dusk

- [ ] Walk your dog in daylight, on a leash, well before displays begin.
- [ ] Close windows, blinds and curtains. Put on some background sound.
- [ ] Settle your dog in the den before the noise starts.

7 On the night

When the bangs start, and the morning after

- [ ] After each loud bang, give a treat or start a short game. The bang predicts something good.
- [ ] Let your dog hide if they want to. Don't pull them out.
- [ ] Stay close and stay calm. If your dog comes to you for comfort, give it.
- [ ] The next day, note how long your dog took to recover. If it was more than a few hours, take that note to your vet before the next fireworks season.

Where music fits

Music doesn't treat a fear of fireworks. Use it like closed curtains: part of a calm room, alongside the training.

My dog's safe spot

Where the den is _____

What helps my dog settle _____

Vet phone _____

Last year, recovery took _____

Sources 1. Salonen et al. · Sci Rep · 2020 2. Riemer · J Vet Behav · 2020

The Barkwoo Music Box clips onto any standard collar and plays calming music, so the music goes wherever your dog goes.
Not a substitute for advice from your vet.

barkwoo.com