

Keeping pets safe during holiday fireworks

Written by By William Madaras For the Sun
Friday, 10 July 2020 06:34



Gallup boasts it is the most patriotic small town in America on its welcoming sign on the outskirts of the city. Patriotic parades, picnics and summer outings highlight celebrations like the Fourth of July. Humans can't seem to get enough of the flash bang, aerial pyrotechnics, but dogs and cats see fireworks differently. They are more sensitive to loud noises, flashing lights and strong smells.

Household pets are frightened by sounds and illuminations that they don't understand. Terrified, they hide and often run away. Some large dogs are even known to break through doors and windows. Frightened cats cower under beds and behind furniture, often joined by dogs.

Cosy Balok, supervisor of Gallup's Animal Protection Services, advises residents to keep their animals secure and safe. "It is important dogs and cats remain indoors during fireworks displays," says Balok. "Do not bring them to any Fourth of July shows. Leave them home."

CAR HEAT CAN KILL YOUR PET

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In addition, she advises residents to heed other pet precautions during summer months. “Don’t leave any pet in a hot car. Temperatures in parked cars rise dramatically and can lead to death,” Balok warns. “Don’t think by opening the car window a crack [it] will help them. It won’t. When you leave your house, leave your pet home. I can promise you, your pet doesn’t need to visit Walmart.”

Balok says that despite laws in some states that allow people to break vehicle windows in order to rescue animals in distress, it is illegal for New Mexicans to do so. In such a situation she advises residents to call her at (505) 726-1453 if they see that a pet needs to be rescued from a hot car.

She also reminds residents that it is illegal to keep dogs tied to a chain outdoors. If your dog is an outside dog, make sure your pet has ample shade and plenty of fresh, cold water, which should be refilled several times a day.

“It is important to provide your pet family member with total protection the entire year. What parent wants to have to tell their child that their pet is missing or dead?” says Balok.

She reminds residents to make sure their dog has a current rabies shot. She also stresses the importance of dogs and cats being registered.

“Make sure your pet has a dog tag issued by the city, so it can easily be identified if it should get lost. That tag will quickly reunite [you] with your pet,” Balok says.

She notes that Gallup’s animal shelter is closed on weekends and if your phone number is on the tag and someone sees your dog is lost, they can contact you right away.

She described a resident whose dog was lost in Red Rock Park on the weekend, but a phone number on the tag quickly reunited “Buff” the Golden Retriever with his overjoyed five-year-old companion.

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TIPS TO KEEP YOUR PET SAFE

Organizations such as the ASPCA, Humane Society and other animal advocate groups offer the following tips to help keep your pet's anxieties low during fireworks.

Keep a radio or TV turned on to soften jarring noises.

Consult your veterinarian. There are medications and techniques that may help alleviate your pet's fear and anxiety.

Create a safe place for your animal to go when they hear the noises that frighten them. Create a "hidey-hole" that is dark and shielded from the frightening sound as much as possible. Make sure to fill it with their favorite blankets, toys, or an item of unwashed clothing, as these may help them feel safe.

Feed your animal before you expect any disturbances. Once the fireworks start, they may be too anxious to eat.

Walk your dog before dusk. It may be some time before it's safe to venture outside again for your dog to relieve him/herself.

Make sure you shut all doors and windows in your home and don't forget to draw the curtains. This will block out any scary flashes of light and reduce the noise level of fireworks. Block off flaps in built-in doggie doors to stop dogs (and cats) from escaping.

These simple rules are designed to get you and your pets through the Fourth of July safely.

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