

ANIMALS FIJI

# How Does Fireworks Affect Your Pets and Animals and How You Can Help Them Cope



Opinion



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**F**ireworks and the Diwali Festival go together. The use of fireworks to celebrate Diwali dates back to about 1400 AD after gun powder came to India.

As a pet owner and possibly even a farmer with animals close to populated areas, it is important to consider how these dazzling displays of light and the loud bangs of fireworks can affect your animal.

Fireworks can lead to various forms of distress in animals.

The explosive sounds can cause anxiety and fear, and the unusual lights can disorient them.

In dogs, this can cause increased heart rates, trembling, hiding, restlessness, running around looking for an escape, running away, dribbling saliva, barking and whining and wanting to hide.

Different dogs react differently; some breeds get more upset than others, but fifty per cent of dogs react significantly to fireworks.

It is essential to watch out for these symptoms so that you can help the dog feel safe and secure during this time.

Humans only hear one-third of what a dog can, so the noise from the fireworks can harm their hearing significantly more than it would a human.

Because dogs do not know what is happening and where the noise is coming from, it makes them fearful and stressed.

Dogs are also upset by thunder, but because there are usually signs of a storm, e.g. wind and rain – they have a warning – with fireworks, they have no such warning signs.

s can also get stressed by the noise but usually hide, so it is not as easy to tell when they are stressed.

Other domestic animals are also frightened by fireworks.

Horses, for example, act similarly to cats and dogs, showing stress or fear and trying to flee and escape.

It is estimated that 79per cent of horses experience anxiety and 26per cent end up hurt by trying to jump fences and even getting hit by cars as they try to get away from the noise.

## Fireworks are SCARY!!!

### HOW YOU CAN HELP YOUR ANIMAL DURING DIWALI FIREWORKS:

- **Keep your pet inside with the radio or tv on during the fireworks.**
- **Make sure your dog or cat ALWAYS has somewhere safe to hide and has access to this place during the fireworks (e.g a cupboard or under furniture)**
- **Provide LOTS of extra bedding so your pet can have something to burrow into.**
- **Leave them alone unless they are likely to hurt themselves.**
- **If your pet is showing signs of fear try to ignore their behaviour and act calmly.**
- **NEVER punish or fuss over your pet when it's scared as this will only make their behaviour worse.**
- **NEVER THROW FIREWORKS TOWARDS YOUR DOG OR CAT! THIS COULD SERIOUSLY HARM THEM!**

**So, what can you do to keep your animal safe and secure?**

It is usual for your pet to be sensitive to new or sudden noises – it is a built-in survival instinct – not a flaw. Here are some things that you can do to ease their stress.

- Make a safe space for your pet. For dogs, a small, quiet spot works. Cats like to be high, so a secure place somewhere higher works for them.
- For larger or farm animals, ensure they are in a safe place where there is less exposure to the sounds and that they cannot escape.
- Dogs should be taken out to the toilet before the expected noise begins, and for cats, the litter trays should be in the same room as their safe space.
- Reduce the noise level of the fireworks by keeping your pet indoors and closing doors, windows and curtains. Put on the television or music to distract from the fireworks.
- If you have a pet that does not come inside - consider shutting them in an outside shed or toilet during the time of the fireworks so that they cannot run away.
- Behave normally – make it seem normal, and they should



A wide variety of fireworks available at local stores in Fiji.

- be less afraid.
- Stay with your pet; don't leave them alone.
- Keep them busy and distracted with toys and small treats.
- If your dog or cat reacts badly, talk to them in a calm, comforting voice. Do not yell or punish them.
- If your dog has been upset by the loud noises previously, talk to your vet about what may be done to help calm them during this event.
- If they are not microchipped, talk to your vet about this – if they are lost a vet can read the microchip, and this improves the chance they will be re-

turned to you.

**Other things to consider**

- If you have a puppy or tiny kitten, how they experience their first fireworks event will affect them for the rest of their life.

It is up to you to help them understand they are safe and secure when they are with you.

- Remember that stray animals have no secure place to go, so it is important to remember that they will be scared and may react if approached and may bark or bite.

Dogs and cats – especially dogs - will try and eat anything lying

**must read**

**DIWALI AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE**

Diwali, also known as Deepawali, is a Hindu festival celebrating the victory of good over evil and light over darkness. It is typically celebrated in October or November. Diwali originates from the Sanskrit word “dīpāvalī” meaning “lamps in a row”.

The festival dates back more than 2,000 years. Celebrations are held over five days with different rituals on each day. The holiday is celebrated with prayers, chanting mantras, lighting lamps, candles, lights, and fireworks. >ANIMAL FIJI

around.

- Fireworks and fireworks rubbish can contain particles that are toxic and can make your animal ill. Be sure to clean up after letting off fireworks to avoid this happening.

**Is there another way to celebrate?**

Your community might find ways to celebrate that don't bother pets or make rules about where and when fireworks can be used.

This can help ensure our furry friends feel safe and happy during special events.

It is a way of being kind and considerate to all the creatures that share our spaces.

It is best to prepare your pet in advance to help them cope.

So, if you go out when the fireworks are on, ensure they are also ready and have a safe and sound environment.

Also, remember that fireworks tend to go on for a couple of weeks, so remember to keep those precautions in place.

Preparing in advance will help keep your animals and wildlife safe and healthy.

Animals Fiji helps animals all around Fiji, with clinics in Savusavu, Labasa, Nadi and Lautoka, and they also hold outreach clinics in other areas.

Source: Animals Fiji

**TAKE Note:**

- If you are worried about your pet's health, make an appointment with your Veterinary Clinic. Animals Fiji helps animals all around Fiji, with clinics in Savusavu, Labasa, Nadi and Lautoka, and they also hold outreach clinics in other areas.
- If you want to support Animals Fiji in their work or to find out more about Animals Fiji's services, contact their Savusavu Clinic (+679) 998 6253 or Nadi Clinic (+679) 993 6647 or visit their website at [www.animalsfiji.org](http://www.animalsfiji.org).