



PRESS RELEASE for Fourth of July Safety for Pets

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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By M. Kathleen Shaw DVM, Vermont Veterinary Medical Association

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Fireworks and holiday gatherings can be enjoyable for people, but they often create risks for pets. Loud noises can cause fear and panic, picnic foods may be unsafe, hot weather and travel can be stressful, and leftover debris can be harmful if animals eat or play with it. Whether you are celebrating at home or visiting others, a little preparation can go a long way toward keeping your animals safe.

Prepare Ahead of Time

- If your dog or cat is frightened by loud noises, contact your veterinarian well before July 4 to discuss medication or other ways to reduce fear and stress during fireworks.
- Make sure dogs and cats wear ID tags with current contact information.
- If you have horses, place your contact information on their breakaway halters in case they bolt.
- Microchipping small animals can greatly improve the chances of being reunited if they escape. If your pet is already microchipped, confirm that your contact details are up to date with the microchip company.
- Keep a current photo of each animal in case you need to help identify them.
- Check that your yard or pasture is secure and can safely contain your animals.

Keep Pets Safe During Celebrations

If you are heading to a parade, party, or fireworks display, the safest choice is usually to leave your pet at home. Loud noises, unfamiliar settings, and crowds can easily frighten animals and cause them to run away.

- Keep pets in a quiet interior room or crate during parties and fireworks.
- If guests are visiting, ask them to watch for pets near doors and gates, and consider posting reminder notes at exits.

- Keep sparklers, glow sticks, fireworks, charcoal, kabob skewers, food scraps, and other human foods out of reach.
- Keep dogs away from barbecue grills. They may lick grease from underneath and accidentally swallow grease-coated gravel or rocks, which can cause illness.

Watch for Heat-Related Risks

If the weather is extremely hot or humid, keep your animals indoors as much as possible. If they do go outside, make sure they always have access to plenty of fresh water.

Never leave your pet in a car during warm weather. Temperatures inside a vehicle can rise quickly, leading to heat stress or even death.

Know the signs of heat stress, including restlessness, drooling, panting, anxious behavior, abnormal gum color, and collapse. If you think your pet is in distress and you have access to lukewarm water, gently wet them down and call your veterinarian immediately.

Traveling with Pets

If you are traveling for the holiday and bringing your pets with you, pack their medical records, current medications, and food. Make sure they are wearing identification that includes your cell phone number in case they get loose during the trip.

Clean Up After the Festivities

Once the celebration is over, remove all food scraps, trash, and fireworks debris from lawns and pastures, and place them in an animal-proof receptacle. Dogs commonly ingest discarded utensils, scraps of food, and grease-coated gravel from under grills, all of which can lead to illness or injury.

Taking these simple precautions can help you create a safer Fourth of July celebration for both people and pets.