

# HELP YOUR PETS CELEBRATE A ★ FEAR FREE AUSTRALIA DAY ★

## FEAR FREE TIPS ON CELEBRATING WITH YOUR PET

Australia Day festivities can be a time of stress for many dogs and cats. From a pet's perspective, loud, unpredictable noises and celebratory fireworks explosions are threatening and an understandable cause for alarm. For pets whose people are hosting a party, the presence of strangers and the changes in their environment—decorations, scented candles or potpourri, furniture moved around—can also be distressing. Thankfully, it doesn't have to be this way. Here are tips to help your dog or cat keep calm and carry on as they join you in celebrating Australia Day.



### YOUR PET'S VETERINARY TEAM IS HERE TO HELP

If your dog or cat is upset by fireworks or other loud noises or on edge around unfamiliar people, talk to your veterinarian about options to help your pet.

- ✓ They may suggest medications or supplements to help your pet relax. For instance, dexmedetomidine oromucosal gel, designed to be absorbed through the gums, can help pets who are fearful of loud or unexpected noises.
- ✓ They might recommend working with a veterinary behaviourist or rewards-based trainer who can help you recognize and anticipate a pet's fears and modify them using techniques like counterconditioning and desensitization.



### SET UP A SOOTHING SANCTUARY

With a little know-how, you can drown out extraneous noise, block flashing lights, and naturally calm your dog and cat.

- ✓ Play calming music like classical, reggae, and soft rock.
- ✓ Fill any gaps in the music with a fountain, fan, or white noise machine.
- ✓ Use pheromone sprays or plug-ins, which mimic the soothing natural chemicals produced by mother cats and dogs to comfort their offspring.
- ✓ For dogs with severe noise anxiety, look for wearable noise-reduction products that work to muffle sounds or temporarily place cotton balls in their ears during the noisy event.
- ✓ Certain nutraceuticals—foods with health benefits—can have a calming effect on anxious animals.



### A SNUG HUG CAN HELP REDUCE ANXIETY

The gentle-pressure hug of a compression garment induces feelings of wellbeing for some dogs (and on occasion, some cats).

- ✓ Some compression garments include gentle vibrations or music to further calm your dog.
- ✓ Compression garments can have a soothing effect for a small percentage of cats (just ensure the cat is actually relaxed and not frozen from fear). Try a looser fit at first with cats before moving to a snugger fit.



## HOME HELP



### FIREWORKS AND PETS DON'T MIX

- Don't take your pet with you to fireworks celebrations.
- Ensure that cats with outside access remain safely indoors, and try to take your dog on potty breaks early in the evening.
- Minimize flashes and flickering of fireworks by blocking windows or accompanying the pet to a room with limited views of the outdoors.
- Turn on lights in the home to decrease the contrast of light changes.
- Provide safe and quiet hiding places for your pets, like closets or bedrooms without windows.



### COMFORT FROM OTHERS

- For some dogs and cats, the calming presence of their beloved humans or canine buddies is a confidence booster in stressful situations on its own.
- For animals upset by new faces and change during holiday parties, it's important to consider if the animal would fare better in a protected space away from the stress of a celebration. Continue to monitor the pet's stress and allow freedom of choice for the pet during interactions, respecting the animal's choice to move away if desired.



### DON'T ATTEMPT TO PULL YOUR DOG OR CAT OUT FROM HIDING

- A fearful, upset dog or cat may lash out and bite if cornered and confronted.
- Gently encourage the dog or cat to come out on their own with a treat or a toy, or simply let the animal hide in their getaway space if safe to do so.
- For noisy events, keeping the room open is helpful, especially for dogs, as the feeling of being trapped can escalate panic.



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