



South Gippsland  
Shire Council

# Caring for pets during fireworks & thunderstorms

There are certain days of the year such as New Years Eve and Australia Day when fireworks are used for celebrations. Fireworks can be frightening for dogs, cats and other animals, including horses, as they are loud and unfamiliar. Thunderstorms have a similar effect to fireworks and can cause extreme panic for pets. It is important to be prepared for nights when fireworks are going to be let off or when there is about to be a thunderstorm. Dogs and cats are generally more relaxed when in the company of their owners. However, if you can not be at home to comfort your pet make sure there is nothing in the house or yard the animal can injure itself on if it panics.

## **Preparation**

In preparation for fireworks or thunderstorms exercise can help your pet be more relaxed. For dogs, in particular, ensure that they have had a long walk so they have not as much spare energy to get excited or anxious. If your pet is going to be kept inside during the firework display or thunderstorm turning the radio or television on may help to dim the noise from outside. Close the blinds or curtains and leave the lights on so that the flashing lights from outside are less obvious. Your pet will gain confidence from you if you do not make too much fuss during this time. It is important not to reinforced nervous behaviour.

## **Confinement**

Make sure your dog or cat is confined to your property.

A dog wandering at large may become injured, lost or stolen and may incur a fine from your local council if picked up and taken to the pound. Legally, a pound or shelter has to keep a pet for eight days before it can be sold or euthanased. In this time you will be contacted to collect your pet if it is identifiable.

Horses can also be frightened by loud noises, in particular, fireworks. Make sure your horse is well away from the area where fireworks can be seen or heard and in an enclosure that is solid and safe. A round yard with solid, high fences is recommended for housing horses that may panic.

## **Microchip**

It is important that your dog or cat is permanently identifiable. Since 2005 it has been a legal requirement to microchip your dog or cat. A microchip will ensure that your pet can be identified and returned to you as your details will be linked to the microchip number and retained at a pet registry that is accessible 24 hours a day. It is not a legal requirement for horses to be microchipped. However, it is recommended and makes it easier for council officers to identify and return your horse if it does escape its' enclosure.

When you know there are going to be fireworks or thunderstorms in your area ensure the three following steps:

- pets are protected in a safe and secure environment;
- pets are wearing identification ie: council tags;
- pets are microchipped and owner details are up-to-date with the relevant registry.

For more information please visit: [www.dpi.vic.gov.au/pets](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/pets)

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