

PETS
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The Green Gazette

Fear-free Fireworks

Is your pet scared of fireworks? You might have accepted that comforting your terrified pet throughout firework season is an inevitability. But what if it didn't have to be? Now is the perfect time to start **desensitisation** and **counter-conditioning**.

What does this mean?

Desensitisation involves slowly exposing your pet to a stimulus they find scary to help them feel less anxious about it. *Counter-conditioning* changes a negative feeling about a scary stimulus into a positive one by associating it with something your pet loves.

How do I do it?

- You will need: a sound recording of fireworks (there are lots on Youtube!), speakers with volume control, a relaxed environment, a positive treat to distract your pet (yummy chews, a kong filled with peanut butter, a licky-mat smeared with meat paste etc.)
- The idea is to play the firework sounds quietly- at a volume where your pet doesn't show any signs of fear or anxiety. This helps with desensitisation.
- While playing the firework sounds, give your pet the chew or treat you prepared earlier. This rewards your pet for settled behaviour when fireworks are going off and helps with counter-conditioning so your pet learns to associate firework sounds with positive experiences.
- Repeat this experience the next day but this time, turn the firework sounds up by one or two degrees of volume. Continue repeating this and slowly increasing the volume each session until your pet is showing relaxed behaviour even while loud firework noises are happening!
- Watch your pet carefully during these sessions- if at any time they show any signs of stress such as stopping any interest in their treat, shaking, cowering, hiding...STOP. Try again the next day with a *lower volume*.

Top tips:

- Start early- this process can take several weeks so don't wait until the 4th November to begin.
- Surround sound/ quality speakers work best for creating realistic firework sounds rather than a mobile phone.
- Don't move too fast, or be afraid to go back a step.
- If your pet isn't food-motivated, playing their favourite game can work too.
- Create a treat or activity that your pet will really enjoy and that will keep them occupied for quite a while to lengthen the training session.
- If you're still struggling, speak to us about anxiety medication to help your pet on noisy nights.

Welcome to our new vet Eilidh!

Eilidh (said ay-lee) joined us at the beginning of September having graduated from Edinburgh Vet School this summer. She grew up over the border in Ayr but has spread her wings and moved south to sunny Cumbria! Eilidh is excited to get stuck in with all aspects of the job, both on-farm and with our smaller patients. We're very pleased to have her with us. Please be patient while she learns the ropes and make sure to say a wee hello when you're next in!

Diarrhoea in Dogs

There are many causes of diarrhoea in dogs, many of them are not serious and are easily resolved. Knowing what to do if your dog develops diarrhoea and deciding when you need to call the vets is important for all dog owners.

Causes of diarrhoea in dogs

- Over-eating or eating something they shouldn't
- Infectious viral or bacterial causes (these can be life threatening in puppies but are usually less serious in adult dogs). Bacteria can be picked up from the environment, from other dogs, or in food, particularly for dogs who scavenge or are fed a raw diet.
- Parasites- these are more common in puppies and not all parasites that can cause diarrhoea are killed by routine worming products
- Foreign bodies or other blockages in the GI tract
- Eating something toxic or poisonous
- Stress!
- Changes in diet or dietary intolerances
- Pancreatitis or liver disease (less common)
- Cancers of the GI tract (less common)

When to call the vet?

- Diarrhoea persisting for 2-3 days with no improvement
- If your dog is very young or very old- they can dehydrate quickly and may need earlier treatment
- Diarrhoea accompanied by repeated vomiting.
- If your dog is not eating or drinking
- If your dog is lethargic and not interested in things they normally enjoy
- If your dog is passing large volumes of blood alongside diarrhoea (small amounts of bright red blood is common with diarrhoea and is usually nothing to worry about)

Compulsory Cat Microchipping

- By **10 June 2024** all cat owners in England must have their cat microchipped.
- Owners may be fined up to £500 if their cat is not chipped.
- Cats must be microchipped by 20 weeks of age. This means if you get your cat neutered at 4 months (as recommended by vets) we can insert a microchip then, under general anaesthetic, which makes the procedure less traumatic for kittens.
- Microchip details must be stored on DEFRA compliant databases (usually run by the microchip manufacturers) and the owner must ensure that these details remain up-to-date.
- Microchipping will not be compulsory for free-living cats such as farm, barn or feral cats.
- Microchips cost £15 to insert (they are included in the price of kitten and puppy packs)

