

A Real Noisy Holiday”  
or  
“Mommy, Why are Fluffy and Rover Hiding in the Closet?”

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So here it is again the Fourth of July, the holiday that heralds in the summer. Hopefully, it will rain; please make it rain! Every year it's the same thing, and the noise has only gotten worse. What is this fascination and compulsion for spending a week's salary on armloads and bags full of fireworks for home use? We and our pets would be a lot better off if we would just go visit, and enjoy one of the many larger display shows put on by various cities. First, we'd save a lot of money, and our pets would be much safer and less stressed. There would be a hell of a lot less garbage and litter left over from those too busy to police up their own mess. Many of us, our children included would not suffer the serious burns and injuries that occur from accidents, and irresponsible fireworks use. This column is not about all of that (sometimes a body just has to vent), it is supposed to be about Fluffy and Rover, Jasper and Ronnie, and all the trials and tribulations that occur around this holiday for the m. What about the thousands of scared shitless dogs and cats (not to mention wildlife) that suffer immeasurably from about June 28<sup>th</sup> till July 6<sup>th</sup> every year of their lives. It's enough to have the beautiful phosphorus colors bursting in the sky that takes your eye off the road while driving down the freeway at 65mph, but those damn noise makers drive me nuttier than I already am. Don't we hear enough explosives on the daily news? I bet if I took a poll of ex-military service folks, I'd find that the majority of them do not enjoy the M-80's and the half sticks of dynamite that are available these days. There are so many illegal fireworks that make it off the reservation, and are used with impunity in many of our neighborhoods, at the park, and on the beaches. We've all heard enough guns and rockets and road side bombs to last a long life time (at least I have anyway). An interesting perspective is that our pets don't like them either, but for many a different reason. Their fear is more akin to us being struck by lightning three times in succession. It is an electric hysterical fear of the noise, the vibration, the shock wave, and the obnoxiousness of explosive fireworks. Some pets aren't bothered in the slightest, and then there are those with varying degrees of fear, and discomfort leading all the way to complete mental nervous breakdown. They become casualties of our modern obsession with noise. Cats will usually just hide. They will be in the closet or under the bed, or hanging on the wall by their claws like a velcro kitty. Dogs, the same for some, and others will literally scratch their toe nails and foot pads off trying to get away from what they can hear, but cannot see. I always enjoy having an old dog around the Fourth, as they are often half deaf and just don't bother to respond to the stimulus anymore. Vets sell a hell of a lot of tranquilizers this time of year, and I hope we are all happy about that one. We use acepromazine and valium fairly effectively for those pets in need. As I said, the noise doesn't just last for one day anymore, and we find we need to give tranquilizers almost daily for a week or so in some pets. To get that much

drug is real hard on the liver and kidney function. What else can I do you ask? There are several safe alternatives to the hard drugs. Probably the best is to pack the kids and pets in the car, and head to the forest or the ocean. Yeah right! That used to work. The beach used to be quiet, and now there are wall to wall bonfires as far as the eye can see, each with carloads of flashes and booms. I am not a sad sack against celebrating, I just wish there were a lot less racket. Not only can you not easily get away from the noise anymore, but it is moving closer to you, and getting noisier every year. So, you can definitely use Rescue Remedy for pets, and people as much as you need to. It helps a lot with terror, shock, and stress. Unfortunately, all it does is to take the edge off, not quite going deep enough to last like the hard drugs. It will help immensely those mild to moderately fearful animals. One can also use the amino acid L-tryptophan, which is found in tuna and turkey, (why do you suppose you always feel so tired after a nice Thanksgiving turkey dinner). It can make one quite sleepy. It is available as a tablet from holistic veterinarians, and is quite safe to use, but should not be used for more than seven consecutive days either. Again though, there are those dogs that blow right thru Rescue Remedy and L-tryptophan. These pets just must go see a homeopathic veterinarian, way before the holiday arrives. When that perfect constitutional remedy is prescribed for the pet, all of the fear goes away. The horrible thorn in the foot pad is gone forever, and the noise no longer bothers them the rest of their lives. Another useful tool is desensitization. This takes some time, and some doing to accomplish, but it basically goes like this. Find a CD or tape of loud fireworks sound effects, (these can be obtained from record stores) well in advance of the Fourth of July. Begin to play it very softly in the background behind other household noises, and soothing music. Give the pet lots of praise and some positive reinforcement as they slowly get used to hearing this racket. Over time, gradually raise the volume, especially when doing things such as eating dinner, and other feel good times. In this way you can help your pet get more accustomed to the noise without the negative side effects of having it all blow up at once. This works for some, but not for all dogs. One other oft forgotten consideration is to make sure all pets, are away from our celebrations so that they do not get in the way of the blasts, or try to retrieve an unfired dud as my old dog Eli tried to do way back when. One of the most important things to remember is security. Make sure your pets are all fitted with ID microchips. Should they every get lost and lose their collar, that will help them find their way home. Keep those collars on, and be sure there is an easily readable name tag with your address and phone number. Frightened pets will be running, and darting across traffic, scared to death, getting lost, or even worse, injured. Keep them indoors, and not outdoors at all for the entire holiday weekend. I have seen dogs and cats get thru any fence you can put up, dig out or escape from kennels, and even break windows trying to escape the noise. The damage some do to their mouth and teeth in their franticness to escape is absolutely tragic. Do not chain them up and think this will contain them. I personally have treated many dogs with severe foot and neck injuries from trying to break free of the tether. In their quest to get away they can have serious life threatening, muscle tissue breakdown with subsequent kidney failure from the over zealous anaerobic exercise that they do while beating a path toward freedom (wherever they think that will be)! That is the key, they don't think at all !!! It is blind fear, and unprocessed primal emotions.

So let's all have a safe and sane holiday. Pay very close attention to those around you, things can shoot right at you with no warning whatsoever, watch for pets on the lam, and try to rescue them if you can (don't jeopardize your safety in traffic). Keep your pets indoors, and treated for the effect of this holiday cheer if necessary. If you use fireworks, use them responsibly, and only on the Fourth of July. Convince others to pick up their own litter (it is a massive cleanup effort to pick up this garbage), and if at all possible save some money, and leave the noise where it belongs, in the war zone. Independence Day can be celebrated without all this noise, and your pets will thank you for it.