



APBC

ASSOCIATION OF PET
BEHAVIOUR COUNSELLORS

Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors
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HOW TO PREPARE YOUR CAT For Fireworks

Fireworks period is fast approaching and as the nights draw in and we encounter stormy weather, many of us start to be aware of the increased likelihood of our cats being exposed to thunder and fireworks.



For some, this will be the first year that their kitten will encounter these events and will want to ensure that these first experiences are positive so that a fear of fireworks does not develop. For others whose cats already show sensitivity to loud noises, this upcoming period can be filled with dread.

If we can prepare our kitten or cat's environment as far in advance of firework period as possible, they are less likely to find the experience stressful. When cats feel worried, they typically seek high places, or hide – these strategies help them to feel safer. Therefore the more opportunities we can provide for our cats to climb and hide in their core territory (i.e. in the home) and actively encourage use of these locations prior to exposure to anything scary, they will feel more in control when they are confronted by loud bangs knowing they have numerous safe places they can retreat to.

Cat trees provide good opportunities for cats to climb and they often include

boxes to hide in too. But we can also make use of other furniture and areas within the home so that our cats have choice and variety within every room. For example, moving furniture slightly away from the walls can provide tunnels where cats can hide. Consider clearing shelves, tops of cupboards or sidetables so that there's room for cats to jump up and rest; or even provide additional shelving or steps so that they can climb up onto higher surfaces such as wardrobes or tops of fridge-freezers. Cardboard boxes can be saved and distributed around the house – turned on their side, upturned with a couple entrance/exit holes cut in, or just left upright. You might want to hide small pieces of food in these new areas, or make them comfortable with existing bedding, to encourage your cats to discover these locations and realise they are places where they can retreat whenever they want.

Feliway Classic (the happy pheromone cats produce when they rub their faces against furniture or people) can be used

in the weeks leading up to firework period to help cats feel settled and more secure in their core territory. You can use the plug-in diffuser or the spray to specifically encourage use of the new climbing and hiding locations. Feliway can also help over the specific firework period to help reduce stress levels. On the day(s) fireworks are expected, lock the catflap and shut windows and doors far in advance of darkness so that you know your cat is safe in the house and there's no risk of bolting when the bangs start. Set up some pieces of food in all the new locations you have created. If they choose to retreat to these areas, leave them alone and act as normal as possible. If they seek comfort and reassurance from you, feel free to give it as you probably would at any other time your cat seeks affection. White or brown noise helps drown out the external noises, as well as heavy curtains being drawn.

Hopefully following these tips will mean firework period will not induce much stress in your cats this year!

My Pet was very frightened by fireworks last year – what can I do?

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