



PRESS RELEASE
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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fourth of July Safety

*By Erin Forbes, DVM—information provided by the AVMA
Vermont Veterinary Medical Association*

Now that summer is here, the Fourth of July is right around the corner! While this is generally a favorite holiday for people, it can be very stressful and dangerous for pets. Firework shows, barbecues, and heat of day can all pose issues for our companion animals.

Everyone loves the fun and festivities of the July Fourth celebrations. However, our pets do not have the same appreciation for these patriotic displays. Dogs, cats, horses, and even livestock can react to fireworks in ways that could potentially cause injury and even death. During upcoming celebrations, never leave pets alone outdoors, even if tethered or in a fenced in yard. It's not uncommon for dogs to escape or injure themselves in a frenzied attempt to escape. In fact, many animal shelters report increases of stray intakes after the Fourth of July holiday due to the number of pets running away to avoid noise and excitement.

If you are planning on attending a fireworks celebration, keep pets at home. A good idea is to keep small pets indoors, in an interior room without windows. Turn on the TV or radio to provide distraction. Keep horses in their stalls if possible and consider talking with your veterinarian prescribing mild sedatives during this time. Be sure that your pet has current ID tags and/or a microchip so that you and your pet can be easily reunited in case he/she runs off. Some pets may become fearfully aggressive due to the loud noises, so protect pets from kids who may not realize the consequences of waving sparklers or setting off home fireworks. If your pet is fearful during fireworks, never punish this behavior but don't reinforce it, either, by trying to sooth the pet by saying things like "It's OK". Paying attention to your pet may positively reinforce the fearful behavior.

If hosting or attending a barbecue or picnic and your pet is invited, make sure to be very careful with all the different foods. People like to feed pets treats but grapes, chocolate, onions, and garlic can be toxic to pets and all of these are generally available at Fourth of July BBQs. Further, if using an outdoor grill, some animals may try to jump up and get the food off the grill, this can lead to severe burns, so keep them away from temptation. If you're hosting guests, ask them to help keep an eye on your pets to make sure they don't escape. Placing notes on exit doors and gates can help both you and your guests remain vigilant.

Finally, since it is summer, it may get too warm or humid for pets at a party. They should be kept inside when it's extremely hot out and they should always have access to shade and water when outdoors. Don't leave them outside at a party unattended as they may start to show signs of heat stroke, which can be life threatening.

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If you have concerns about your animals during July Fourth celebrations, talk with your veterinarian about the best ways to keep your pets safe.

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The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA) is a professional organization of 370 veterinarians dedicated to compassionate animal care and quality medicine.