



## **Vets call on retailers to stop selling fireworks**

### **More than 8 in 10 pet owners back crackdown on sale of fireworks**

Senior vets are calling for major retailers to stop selling fireworks due to the distress it causes pets and wildlife.

In an open letter, Dave Leicester, head of video vet at [Vets Now](#), the UK's leading emergency vets, has issued a plea to supermarkets and convenience stores to take immediate action to prevent animals being traumatised and injured on and around bonfire night.

Members of the public can back these calls by signing a change.org petition [here](#).

Every year millions of pets are traumatised by fireworks, sometimes with tragic consequences. Many of these are caused by random displays, and there are fears of an upsurge in unsanctioned fireworks displays across the country this year. It comes amid mounting concern that the cancellation of large-scale, professional events brought about by the coronavirus pandemic could cause a rise in amateur firework displays in gardens and streets.

The RSPCA have estimated that 45% of dogs in the UK show signs of fear when they hear fireworks, and with a surge in puppy ownership during this year's lockdown, vets are also concerned that many new pet owners might not be aware their pet is scared.

According to a poll carried out by Vets Now of more than 3400 people, 83% of pet owners support banning the sale of fireworks for private use.

Sainsbury's decision to ban fireworks in 2019 in all of its 2300 stores was met with an overwhelmingly positive response.

Senior emergency vet Dave Leicester and his team of online video vets are bracing themselves to be inundated with calls from worried pet owners in the run up to bonfire night. The experienced vets are available on a video call to discuss any worries or concerns pet owners might have. Dave explains in his open letter to retailers:

"The dangers fireworks pose to pets, livestock and wildlife is no secret. Every year in our emergency clinics, we see the heart-breaking reality of seemingly-harmless fireworks displays — pets burnt or hit by cars after being spooked, others bolting and going missing, sometimes never to return, self-inflicted, life-changing injuries caused in a moment of panic, and, sadly, also deliberate, malicious firework injuries.

"As organised local fireworks displays are likely to be cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic, more people will look to hold their own private displays using fireworks. This will lead to even greater risk than in previous years.

To find out more about what you can do to help prepare and calm your pet in the run up to fireworks night, and to view the open letter, visit the [Vets Now fireworks advice hub](#).

All of Vets Now's 60 out-of-hours clinics and 24/7 hospitals throughout the country have a vet and vet nurse on-site at all times.

-ENDS-

**Notes to editors:**

**For additional expert comment, further information or high-resolution images, please contact:**

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**Copy of the Open Letter:**

Dear retailers,

Pets have been a lifeline for millions of people this year. They have been a source of comfort and companionship, they've motivated us to get moving, and they've lifted our spirits during the most difficult of times.

Now fireworks season is around the corner — many owners are reluctantly preparing themselves to watch on helplessly as their terrified pet suffers. Some will end up injured, others will tragically lose their lives.

The UK's wildlife and livestock will suffer severe psychological distress, as they do every year. Many will injure themselves, often seriously, attempting to flee and hide from the lights and noise.

We call on you to stop the sale of fireworks in your stores to prevent this unnecessary suffering. Sainsbury's decision to ban fireworks in 2019 was met with an overwhelmingly positive response.

We are asking you to follow their lead this year and in the coming years.

We know most pet owners would welcome this. In our recent poll 84% of respondents supported this change.

The dangers fireworks pose to pets, livestock and wildlife is no secret. Every year in our emergency clinics, we see the heart-breaking reality of seemingly-harmless fireworks displays — pets burnt or hit by cars after being spooked, others bolting and going missing, sometimes never to return, self-inflicted, life-changing injuries caused in a moment of panic, and, sadly, also deliberate, malicious firework injuries.

As organised local fireworks displays are likely to be cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic, more people will look to hold their own private displays using fireworks bought from your stores. This will lead to even greater risk than in previous years.

We usually advise owners to keep their pets indoors when an official fireworks display is being held in their local area, but it's much more challenging this year. How can we prepare pets for the unpredictable, unplanned nature of private displays? How can we try to make pets feel safe when we know that a massive increase in private fireworks is likely to cause harm to so many?

There is no doubt that the country deserves some joy. But the momentary lift fireworks will give us simply doesn't compare to the misery and suffering it will cause millions of animals.

It has been a year full of uncertainty, but this is something you have the power to control. With your support, millions of animals will be spared the avoidable trauma of unpredictable private fireworks displays. You will undoubtedly be saving lives.

During the pandemic, you have worked tirelessly to keep the country moving and you deserve the utmost respect for your service and dedication.

As you continue the honourable task of keeping the nation fed, we kindly ask you to help keep the nation's pets safe too.  
Please consider banning the sale of fireworks in your stores.

Yours in hope,  
Dave Leicester  
Head of clinical intelligence  
Vets Now