

Help Your Pet Have a Fear Free **New Year's Eve**

New Year's festivities can be a time of stress for many dogs and cats. From a pet's perspective, loud, unpredictable noises and celebratory fireworks explosions are threatening and an understandable cause for alarm. For pets whose people are hosting a party, the presence of strangers and the changes in their environment—decorations, scented candles or potpourri, furniture moved around—can also be distressing. Thankfully, it doesn't have to be this way. Here are tips to help your dog or cat keep calm and carry on as they join you in welcoming in the new year.

Your Pet's Veterinary Team is Here to Help

If your dog or cat is upset by fireworks or other loud noises or on edge around unfamiliar people, talk to your veterinarian about options to help your pet.

- They may suggest medications or supplements to help your pet relax. For instance, dexmedetomidine oromucosal gel, designed to be absorbed through the gums, can help pets who are fearful of loud or unexpected noises.
- They might recommend working with a veterinary behaviourist or rewards-based trainer who can help you recognize and anticipate a pet's fears and modify them using techniques like counterconditioning and desensitization.

Set Up a Soothing Sanctuary

With a little know-how, you can drown out extraneous noise, block flashing lights, and naturally calm your dog and cat.

- Play calming music like classical, reggae, and soft rock.
- Fill any gaps in the music with a fountain, fan, or white noise machine.
- Use pheromone sprays or plug-ins, which mimic the soothing natural chemicals produced by mother cats and dogs to comfort their offspring.
- For dogs with severe noise anxiety, look for wearable noise-reduction products that work to muffle sounds or temporarily place cotton balls in their ears during the noisy event.
- Certain nutraceuticals—foods with health benefits—can have a calming effect on anxious animals.

A Snug Hug Can Reduce Anxiety

The gentle-pressure hug of a compression garment induces feelings of wellbeing for some dogs (and on occasion, some cats).

- Some compression garments include gentle vibrations or music to further calm your dog.
- Compression garments can have a soothing effect for a small percentage of cats (just ensure the cat is actually relaxed and not frozen from fear). Try a looser fit at first with cats before moving to a snugger fit.

Tips for Comfort & Safety at Home

Fireworks can be overwhelming for pets, so keep them safely indoors. Ensure cats stay inside, and walk dogs early to avoid loud noises. Block windows, use rooms with limited outdoor views, and turn on lights to minimize the impact of flashes. Provide quiet hiding spots, such as closets or windowless rooms, and allow pets to remain there undisturbed. If they seem reluctant to come out, gently encourage them with treats or toys rather than forcing them.

The calming presence of familiar people or pets can help, but stressed animals may prefer a quiet space away from celebrations. Monitor their comfort levels and respect their need to retreat if they feel overwhelmed.



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