

Press Release

2 November 2009

SPCA preparing for worst ahead of Guy Fawkes

With Guy Fawkes (5 November) just a few days away, the Cape of Good Hope SPCA is preparing to receive a flood of lost and stray pets, terrified by the effects of fireworks.

“We’re dreading it - it’s an absolute nightmare time of the year for us and very upsetting to see so many animals flee their homes as they try and escape the loud bangs from fireworks”, said Margie Ainscow, CoGH SPCA Animal Care Centre Manager.

“Last week we had a taste of what is to come after the big thunderstorm, which resulted in dozens more dogs being admitted as strays to our lost and found department”, she said. “None had any identification, making the task of reuniting them with their owners that much more difficult. We appeal to pet owners to please identify their animals, preferably with a micro-chip or at least with a dog tag.”

The SPCA is opposed to the use of any fireworks, which emit a loud noise due to the trauma and injuries they cause animals. Because animals are able to hear a wider range of sounds than humans can, the sound from fireworks is at least five times louder to them. Their natural response is to try and escape the sound with sometimes tragic consequences.

The Animals Protection Act clearly states that “it is illegal for any person to terrify any animal” yet despite the SPCA’s efforts to educate the public on the dangers and legalities of using fireworks and lobbying government for a total ban on the use of fireworks, injuries and trauma to animals occurs each year during fireworks season (Diwali, Guy Fawkes, New Year, etc).

The Firearms and Explosives Ordinance Act also makes it illegal for any child under the age of 16 to use or buy fireworks and it is also illegal to use or sell fireworks without an official permit except at an officially designated site. Yet, despite this legislation, fireworks are still sold in many corner cafés to anyone with money to buy and let off at home where they pose a potential danger. The act also prescribes the maximum size that may be handled by members of public.

Harming an animal with fireworks will result in prosecution and concerned members of the public are to please report any acts of alleged cruelty to the SPCA 24 hr control centre - 700 4140 /59 or a/h to 083 326 1604. Members of the public can also contact the Metro police 24 hour call centre to lodge complaints regarding illegal firework activities on 021596 1999.

The SPCA advises residents living areas where fireworks will be released to adopt the following guidelines to protect their animals:-

- Ensure all animals have identification – sudden loud bangs can cause animals to run away and get lost. Remember their hearing is far more acute than ours – i.e. they can hear a grasshopper eating.
- If possible, stay at home with them if you suspect fireworks will be used nearby;

- If you can't be at home, keep your pets inside and preferably in a room that is safe and secure;
- Try and mask any noise by drawing the curtains and playing calming music at a reasonable volume;
- Put familiar and comforting things around them such as toys, baskets, etc;
- Give your pets a nutritious and balanced meal at night – this is likely to make them more sleepy;
- Give them something to chew on – a chewy bone or catnip toys for cats;
- If you suspect your pet will react badly to fireworks, then seek professional advice from your veterinarian who may prescribe a sedative to help them cope. These days there are also a number of effective homeopathic remedies available that may be bought across the counter at vet shops.

Ends

Issued by the Cape of Good Hope SPCA. For more information please contact Lamees Martin on 021 700 4141 or email comms@spca-ct.co.za.

Notes to the Editor

The comparative hearing ranges of dogs, cats and humans are as follows:-

Humans:	20Hz – 23Hz
Dogs:	45Hz – 60Hz
Cats:	45Hz – 64Hz

Cats and dogs can hear sounds at least two octaves higher than humans, which is why they are so scared by the sound of fireworks.

According to the City of Cape Town website (www.capetown.gov.za) the following sites have been approved for the release of fireworks on 5 November:-

Approved sites:

Cape Town

- Mnandi Beach parking area (near Law Enforcement office)
- Maiden's Cove parking area
- Strandfontein Beach parking area
- Athlone Stadium parking area

Helderberg

- Gordon's Bay Main Beach
- Strand Beach (at Deep Blue)
- Macassar Beach

South Peninsula

- Sunrise Beach, Muizenberg
- Fish Hoek Beach
- Hout Bay Beach

Tygerberg

- De Grendel Sports Ground, Parow
- Nooitgedacht Sports Ground, Bishop Lavis
- Sports Ground in Roosendal Street, Delft

Oostenberg

- Blue Downs Sports Stadium, Hindle Road, Delft

Blaauwberg

- Mamre Park, opposite SAPS
- Wesfleur Sportsfield, Atlantis
- Palms site, Milnerton
- Blaauwberg Beach, area opposite KFC (Blaauwberg Road)
- Ratanga Junction BC parking area, Century City