

July 4th Pet Hazards!

July 4th is a day of celebration for many pet owners but it can end tragically for frightened pets. Lee County Domestic Animal Services offers tips to keep pets safe from the hazards of fireworks and the cumulative damage of exposure to prolonged loud noises.

Fort Myers, Florida, 6/18/10—Fourth of July celebrations can be fun for the whole family including pets with just a little advanced planning. Fireworks displays and large crowds are almost never a good place to take your pet. Both dogs and cats will be much happier if left at home in familiar safe surroundings. Lee County Domestic Animal Services offers the following guidelines for a safe and happy Independence Day.

- Never leave your pets alone outside where they can become frightened. Even in a fenced yard, a scared pet can escape and get lost, become injured, or get hit by a car.
- Under no circumstance should a pet be left unattended in a car. A pet in panic could result in damage to the car and injury to the pet. With only hot air to breathe, pets can suffer serious injury or death in a short period of time. Partially opened windows will not provide sufficient air.
- The best place to leave pets is inside the house in a room where curtains or shades can be closed to block flashes of light caused by the fireworks. Leave a TV or radio playing to muffle outside noises. A favorite blanket or toy can also provide security. Having someone stay home with the pet is the best option.
- Even if the celebration takes place at home it's wise to take pets inside before the fireworks begin. Fireworks can be frightening even with an owner present and pets, children, and fireworks are a potentially hazardous combination.
- As always pets should have a current county license and preferably a microchip ID to provide permanent identification. If the worst case scenario happens identification will increase a pet's chances of being reunited with its owner. Less than five percent of pets entering Lee County's shelter without identification are reunited with their owners.
- If your pet's reaction to noise has been so severe in the past that it may need to be tranquilized, consult your veterinarian well in advance.

- An animal behaviorist can also be a good option. Working with pets through positive reinforcement and behavior modification training can help pets get over their fears.
- If you find a lost pet bring it to Lee County Domestic Animal Services' shelter or call 533-7387 to have the animal picked up. This is the best opportunity the pet will have to be reunited with its owner. LCDAS can scan for a microchip ID and will place the pet's photo on its website, <http://www.leelostpets.com>, which updates hourly.

For more information on pet safety, microchip identification, lost pets, or pets for adoption call 239-533-7387 (LEE-PETS) or go to <http://www.leelostpets.com>.