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Humane Society urges public to keep pets indoors during July 4 activities

Fourth of July fireworks dazzle people, but the flashes of light and noise can frighten animals, causing them to become injured or to run away.

"Every year, we see a dramatic increase in the number of stray dogs and cats during the Fourth of July holiday weekend," said Beth Ward, vice president of animal care at Humane Society Silicon Valley (HSSV). "The frightening sights and sounds of fireworks can spook animals and they often do whatever it takes to escape from their confines."

Ward offers the following suggestions to pet owners on how to create a happy yet safe Fourth of July for pets:

- Never leave pets outside and alone. Even if a yard is fenced, your pet may panic and escape; he or she may even become lost or injured while trying to find safety.
- Try to be home on Independence Day. If your pet is afraid of loud noises, keep him inside and turn on a TV or radio that masks the booms of fireworks. If you can't be at home, leave your pet inside in an area where he or she feels secure and at ease.
- Protect your possessions. When scared, some animals may become destructive, so be sure to remove anything that can be damaged or might harm your pet if it was to be chewed.
- Make sure your pet is wearing proper ID tags or is microchipped in the event that he becomes lost. Humane Society Silicon Valley is open seven days a week to escort owners of lost pets through its kennels. n Bring cats indoors several hours before dark or at a minimum, keep them in your garage.
- Stay away from animals that are scared or traumatized by the noise and keep your children away from them. If cornered, they are more likely to bite.
- Do not take your pets with you to watch fireworks. It's best to leave your dog safe at home with a pet sitter, relative or friend.

Humane Society Silicon Valley's Lost & Found Department is open Monday - Friday from 10:30 a.m. - 7:30 p.m. and Saturday/Sunday from 10 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. The shelter will be closed on July 4 for reclaims and adoptions, but will accept incoming stray animals that will be available for reclaims on July 5. More information about what to do if your pet is lost can be found at: http://www.hssv.org/services_lost.html.