



# NEWSLETTER

## Autumn 2010

*"Caring for your pets  
as we do our own"*

*In this issue...*

- Helping your pet cope with fireworks
- Polo bravely battles kidney failure
- Pet Smile Month

The summer has flown by and we've certainly been very busy at the practice. The arrival of Autumn reminds us that Bonfire Night is on its way. If your pet has a fear of fireworks do check out our advice so that you can take steps now to make the evening much more enjoyable!

Shepton Vets Small Animal Team xx

### Inspirational Polo bravely fights illness

Seventeen is a great age for any cat but one special elderly patient, Polo, has astonished us all with his love of life despite having kidney failure.

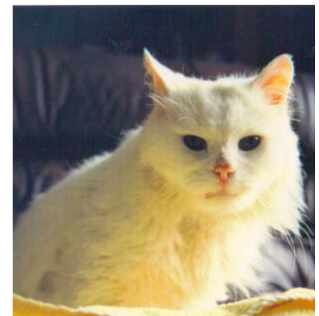
Polo was registered at the practice in 2006 and for several years was in great health, only visiting the vet for his annual boosters. Last July however, he suddenly lost weight. His worried owners brought him to the surgery where he had several tests and was hospitalised on intravenous fluids. Results showed that Polo unfortunately had chronic renal failure. This meant that his kidneys were damaged and no longer able to conserve fluid or excrete toxins properly. When Polo was feeling better after a few days, he went home on medication to improve blood flow to his kidneys.

Polo did very well for six months, with a good appetite and weight gain. He was even catching mice again! But when he had a brief relapse tests showed his condition was gradually worsening. The options were discussed and it was decided to start Polo on at-home fluid therapy, with his owners giving him injections of fluids under the skin every other day, to help prevent dehydration.

This is not a common treatment as many owners can find it difficult but Polo's owners were determined to do all they could. He was also started on a supplement to reduce his intake of phosphorus and provide some extra omega 3 fatty acids.

Polo's next challenge came when he found it difficult to eat as a result of dental disease. However, he sailed through his anaesthetic and dental treatment, even though he had four teeth removed! Polo continues to cope remarkably with his condition at the age of 17, taking all his treatments in his stride. He especially likes to watch Countdown while he has his fluid therapy!

Chronic renal failure is a common condition in older cats. It is not curable but can often be managed very well with a combination of dietary changes, regular fluid therapy and medication.



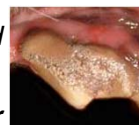
*Polo relaxes at home in front of the television*



### KEEP YOUR PET SMILING

September is Pet Smile Month, when we offer **free** dental checks at the practice.

- **Did you know that dental disease is estimated to affect up to 80% of dogs and cats over 3 years old?**
- Dental disease can cause serious health problems and require expensive treatment
- We recommend regular toothbrushing for all dogs and cats and are happy to explain how to do this
- Special diets and chews can also help. **Ask at the practice for details**



Images courtesy of www.petsmile.org

*For further information or advice on any of the subjects covered in this newsletter please contact the practice*

Call us: 01749 343955

Email: [vet@sheptonvet.com](mailto:vet@sheptonvet.com)

Surf: [www.sheptonvet.com](http://www.sheptonvet.com)

Or simply pop in: SVG,  
Allyn Saxon Drive, Shepton  
Mallet BA4 5QH

[www.sheptonvet.com](http://www.sheptonvet.com)



# THINGS THAT GO BANG IN THE NIGHT



Bonfire night is an exciting time but many pet owners view it with a sense of dread as firework phobias are all too common in our dogs and cats. We take a look at the best ways to help them cope, so you can relax and enjoy the festivities.

**What can I do if my pet is frightened of fireworks?**

With plenty of time and preparation you can help alleviate your pet's fear. Using a desensitisation CD of firework sounds gradually helps them get used to the noise. Well before the firework season begin playing the CD regularly at a low volume while your pet is relaxed. Ensure you keep it quiet enough that your pet shows no fearful behaviour and it may help to give dogs a treat so that they associate the sounds with something pleasant. Over several weeks gradually increase the volume, at all times ensuring that your pet is still calm and happy, and eventually they will be comfortable with the sounds when they happen for real. We recommend the 'Sounds Scary' desensitisation CD, available at [www.soundtherapy4pets.com](http://www.soundtherapy4pets.com)

Pheromone therapy can also help. Special household diffusers, plus sprays for cats and collars for dogs, are available from the practice and release scents mimicking the natural pheromones which help dogs and cats feel calm.

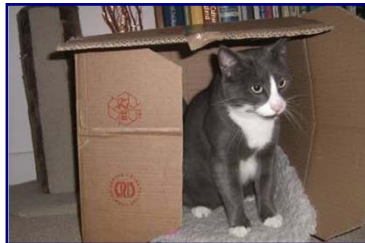


**What about on the night?**

Before the fireworks begin put the TV or radio on and close the curtains to block some of the noise and flashes. Give your pet free access to an area where they feel safe and secure. Cats will prefer to choose a quiet corner away from other pets and people with somewhere to hide.

**Firework phobias can result in extreme distressed behaviour as well as longer term stress-related health issues.**

Provide a litter tray nearby so they don't have to brave the outside world and simply leave them to it.



For dogs, provide a safe place a few days before, perhaps a crate or table covered with a blanket. Feed them in there a few times so they feel happy with the area. On the night, take them out to relieve themselves before the commotion starts. Once the fireworks begin ensure they can get to their safe place but don't force them to go in there. Most importantly, act as normally as possible during the fireworks no matter how upset they get, as your dog will look to you to know whether to worry. It may be difficult not to reassure your dog when so distressed but remember that, by doing so, you are simply rewarding the fearful behaviour and reinforcing the message that there is something to be frightened of. However, do reward any calm and happy behaviour with attention and a treat.

**Can medication help?**

If your pet's fear is severe prescription medications can provide short-term help. Sedatives and anti-anxiety drugs

help reduce reactions to sounds and the vet will advise whether these are suitable for your pet. Such therapy does have its limitations - these medications are not without risks and side-effects and they must only be used under veterinary direction. They are ineffective if given once your pet is already distressed and they do nothing to solve the underlying fears. But if used sensibly alongside other methods, they can help your pet cope until the phobia is gone.

## Action Plan

1. **Preparation is key** - contact the practice well before firework season to discuss how to manage your pet's fears.
2. **A combination of methods** - Consider CDs, pheromone therapy and supplements.
3. **On the night** - Take steps to produce a calm atmosphere and ignore fearful behaviour.
4. **Prevention better than cure** - take action with puppies and kittens to ensure they are confident with loud noises. The Sound Therapy CDs are ideal for this purpose.

**Is there anything else I can give?**

We can supply special diets and nutritional supplements which contain natural substances known to help support a calm state in dogs and cats. These can help keep your pet relaxed while you apply the methods above.

