



# CASTLE VETS PETS

Newsletter – October 2023

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## Adoptober

In October the RSPCA launches its annual Adoptober campaign with the hope of encouraging more people to consider adopting or fostering animals looking for new homes.

What could be more rewarding than giving a cat, dog, horse or another animal, a second chance at life. The animal you adopt could have had a really awful past life. They may have been mistreated, abandoned and left to fend for themselves or it could simply be that their previous owners were no longer able to look after them due to a change in circumstances or poor health. By rehoming a pet, you are giving an animal a loving home in which it can feel safe and learn to be happy once more.

Sue Pitman who is a member of staff here at Castle Vets adopted her dog Hendrix and here is her adoption success story....



*We felt as though something was missing from our lives and after a lot of consideration, we realised we wanted a dog. We knew from the start that we wanted to give a rescue dog another chance at a loving family life, as there are so many abandoned dogs living in kennels waiting for the right person to come along.*

*When we checked out Gables Dogs & Cats Home we spotted Hendrix, a 2-year-old working cocker spaniel, who pulled at Jon's heart strings as he grew up with a Spaniel. Hendrix had been in the home for over 8 months as everyone who viewed him found him to be too hyper.*

*We booked a visit to meet him and were allowed to have a play with him in the paddock. He didn't really pay us much attention or play ball, as he was too busy running around the perimeter fence barking at other dogs being walked past. But every now and again there was a glimmer of a very adorable dog who loved attention.*

*We went back for a second visit and took him for a walk on our own away from the hustle and bustle of the kennels, it was then we saw his attentive, loving side. Jon instantly fell in love, but I was still a bit more wary and worried he may be a handful. But we both decided to give him a chance and after making adjustments*

*around the home as required by the shelter, like extending the height of our garden fence, we were allowed to bring him home.*

*As soon as he stepped through our front door, he had the biggest smile on his face, jumped on the sofa and grabbed a cushion in his mouth. But after being told no, he just instantly calmed down and was a completely different dog from the one we saw in the kennels. He fitted into our lives perfectly, was obedient and became so chilled out.*

*He spends his days at work with Jon, and loves going for hikes on the moors or forests. He has travelled around the UK on holidays with us, from Cornwall to Wales and up to Scotland. He'll be 10 this year but is still young at heart although his joints are starting to complain. He gives us so much love and never fails to make us smile.*

*We are so glad we gave hyper Hendrix a second chance and it proves you can't judge a book by its cover, sometimes the setting plays a part in how a dog is behaving. We wouldn't hesitate in adopting another rescue dog in the future.*



## Make Sure Your Pet Has a Happy Halloween

Halloween is just around the corner and this time of year can be stressful for our pets. Regular knocks on the door from people in costumes can leave animals feeling quite spooked. There are also lots of sweet treats around the home and decorations which could pose a potential risk to our four-legged friends.



If you have an animal of a nervous disposition but still want to carry out Halloween traditions it may be worth leaving treats on the front doorstep. That way, any visiting trick-or-treaters can just help themselves without upsetting your pet. Sweets containing the sweetener xylitol can be dangerous if consumed by our pets and even a small amount of chocolate can be fatal so make sure they are kept well out of their way.

Seeing an animal dressed up in Halloween costumes may look cute but it is unlikely your pet shares the same enthusiasm. Costumes can make pets feel uncomfortable, too hot and stressed so we recommend avoiding them altogether. Your furry companions are adorable just the way they are!

# Fireworks! Be Prepared!

Firework season is nearly upon us again and approximately two thirds of our pets are scared of fireworks. So how can you help your pet deal with this potentially scary time of year?

## **Monitor your animal for signs of distress:**

Signs of stress in dogs include:

- Loss of appetite
- Increase or decrease in resting
- Yawning
- Lip licking
- Head turns
- Hiding
- Barking
- Trembling
- Seeking out people/other dogs
- Panting
- Salivating
- Elimination of urine/faeces
- Vomiting
- Freezing
- Fidgeting

Signs of stress in cats include:

- Excessive grooming and scratching
- Meowing
- Urinating outside the litter tray
- Hiding
- Running away and refusing to eat
- Darting around the house
- Acting aggressively towards owners and other pets

## **Be prepared:**

*Natural calming products* such as Calmex, Zylkene or Pet Remedy can be used. These can be very supportive. We also advise the use of *pheromones*. Adaptil and Feliway are synthetic copies of natural pheromones and have been scientifically proven to provide support in challenging and stressful situations, including during firework season.

*ThunderShirts* can also be helpful, a bit like swaddling an infant. They act by applying constant gentle pressure to the upper body which can release calming hormones.

We no longer recommend the use of older classes of sedatives as they have no beneficial effect on an animal's emotional state, and just affect their mobility. This results in a terrified animal with no ability to do anything about it! A secondary effect of sedatives is that they reduce inhibition (a bit like alcohol does in people). Reduced inhibition has caused dogs to attack (and sometimes kill) other animals in the household. We do, however, have other drugs available that provide effective short-term support. These are prescription only products so a discussion with your vet will be necessary.



## On the day:

These are Castle Vets top tips for keeping your animals safe and helping them to cope

- Walk dogs before it gets dark and make sure they are on a lead with a well-fitting harness or collar.
- Make sure collar tags and microchip details are up to date.
- Ensure all windows and doors are shut and close any curtains.
- Lock or block cat flaps to stop pets escaping.
- Switch on a television or radio to drown out some of the noise.
- Don't leave your pets alone in the house if possible.
- Provide hiding places (such as a den, lined with used blankets or clothes).
- Provide activities that involve licking, chewing and sniffing (such as Licki Mat, snuffle mat, stuffed Kongs) which are all calming behaviours for dogs. Start using these before the fearful event so that your pet becomes familiar with them.
- Let your animals hide if they want to - don't try and force them to go in or come out.
- Keep in mind that cats feel more comfortable in high resting places.
- Try not to react to the fireworks or show concern.
- Stroke and talk to your pets in a calm manner (if they are looking for interaction).
- Provide extra litter trays for cats.
- Never punish or get angry with your pet.
- Never take your pet to a firework display.
- If you have rabbits or guinea pigs either bring them indoors or cover hutches with a blanket but make sure there is sufficient ventilation. A cardboard box with holes in filled with hay placed in the hutch makes a great hiding place.



## Be proactive:

Animals that are scared of fireworks can also become increasingly reactive to other sounds that are similar - such as thunder, doors slamming and gun shots. Desensitisation programmes are very effective for both cats and dogs who find loud noises stressful. These programmes need to be started in a period when it is unlikely that they will be exposed to fireworks, so we recommend starting this in Feb/March time. We have a qualified behaviourist on the team that can discuss this further with you.

There is increasing evidence of a link between noise phobias and other health conditions including chronic pain. An appointment with your vet is recommended initially to rule out other health conditions, especially if this is a new phobia.

For more information about any of the products mentioned or to make a vet appointment contact Castle Vets on 01566 772211

