

TOP TIPS TO KEEP HORSES AND OWNERS SAFE THIS

Bonfire Night

Bonfire night and fireworks displays are usually a time of fun and excitement. However, for many animals and their owners, the 5th November can be a nerve-racking experience. Explosions, fire and flashing lights are all things most animals find pretty terrifying and can prove challenging for those with animal companions.

That's why Bransby Horses, an equine rescue and welfare charity in Lincolnshire, has written a handy guide to make sure horses, their owners and event organisers have a happy and relaxed bonfire night.

Why do horses act so erratically around bonfire night and fireworks? Understanding this, and why they become so frightened, is key to creating a safe and stress-free environment for horses. All horses, ponies, donkeys and mules are flight animals which means they can be easily scared by the loud noises and bright lights of fireworks. This can result in unusual or erratic behaviour, making horses stressed and unpredictable. When horses panic, they go into flight mode; this is when they are most likely to cause injury to themselves and others.

How can owners keep their horses safe?

1. All horses thrive on routine and any change in this can lead to anxiety and stress. By providing a safe, secure environment and keeping to the same management routine, this can help reassure horses during this period.

2. If a horse is being stabled, it can be a good idea to leave the lights on and play the radio to help drown out the effects of the fireworks. This routine should be introduced in advanced and radio licensing laws will need to be considered by commercial yards or businesses.

3. Plan for unforeseen circumstances:

- **Fire** – create an evacuation plan to ensure both horses and humans can safely escape a fire.
- **Escape** – if a horse escapes, contact the police and obtain an incident number. Keep a recent photo and horse identification documents to hand for this purpose.

- **Injury** – ensure first aid kit and materials are fully stocked. Keep emergency vet details so they are easy to access.

- **Accident/damage** – most horse owners already have third party and liability insurance. It is advisable to purchase as it will protect both owner and horse should a horse cause an accident or damage to property of others. The British Horse Society has launched a new app where horse related incidents and accidents can be logged, find out more here.

- **Check locally for scheduled displays** - contact the organisers to see if the displays can be directed away from the horse's environment. The organisers will also be able to advise of the timetable so you know when to be on alert.

- If a horse is exceptionally sensitive to fireworks and associated stress, contact a vet and seek advice on the use of sedatives.

How can firework / bonfire organisers help?

1. Clearly advertise the event. If possible, try letting local horse owners know when the displays are scheduled. This can be really helpful as it allows the owners to make plans to ensure their animal is kept safe and stress-free.

2. Think about directing the displays away from known homes with horses. This can potentially reduce the impact of the noise and light pollution.

How can everyone help?

1. Attend organised events rather than creating your own display. If you are planning to have a display try to use low noise fireworks - those that create a visual effect but are quieter or produce no bang.

2. If planning a display, let any local horse owners know what day and time the display is so they can make preparations to settle their equines.

3. If a horse in distress is discovered, it is not advisable to approach it. They can be unpredictable and could cause an accident or injuries. Wherever possible contact the owner and allow them to manage the situation. If a horse has escaped and is loose on the road, please contact the police for assistance.

Love horses? Pay Bransby Horses a visit!

Bransby Horses rescues, rehabilitates and rehomes approximately 100 equines each year. Their 600-acre site is the perfect place to bring the family for a day out. Entry is free and visitors can learn more about the charity's rescue and rehabilitation work, as well meeting the horses, ponies, donkeys and mules. Take a stroll through the beautiful countryside walkways and then enjoy the Café, Gift Shop or Donated Goods Shop. There really is something for everyone at Bransby Horses!