

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-wracking experience. Explosions, fire and flashing lights are all things most animals find pretty terrifying and can prove challenging for those with animal companions.

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.

