

Fireworks have all kinds of unintended consequences; we can do better

Policy

The Animal Justice Party (AJP) is opposed to fireworks because of their impact on wildlife and domesticated animals, which outweighs any engaging and exciting display.

Key Objectives

1. End the use of fireworks.
2. Promote less harmful and more sustainable entertainment, e.g., drone displays and laser light shows. All entertainment will have some impact on animals which must be considered in event planning.

Background

Impact on animals

Many animals are stressed by the noises associated with fireworks and will tend to flee. *Forty five percent of dogs have a¹ fear of fireworks and many react badly² to fireworks to the extent of escaping and becoming lost³.* Horses and *small mammals⁴* also suffer. Animals confined by fences can become injured and may die as a result. In some cases, vets prescribe sedation and anti-anxiety drugs but these have *side effects⁵*. Birds and bats, either in flight or roosting, may also be startled and injured. The smoke can also cause fear for wild animals who think that it indicates fire - this is particularly problematic for animals held in zoos and other enclosures who cannot attempt to escape from the smoke. In the USA, fireworks caused

the deaths⁶ of thousands of red-winged blackbirds over the city of Beebe. Traumatized nesting birds can abandon their nests causing the eggs or chicks to die. Australian examples have not been studied⁷.

Impact on the environment

Fireworks are well known to *start fires⁸*. For example, in the Northern Territory *numerous⁹ grassfires¹⁰* are started by "cracker night".

Therefore, most firework displays in Australia are held over water, which also enhances the visual display. The potential exists for *short-term elevated concentrations of chemicals¹¹* used in fireworks to appear in surface water, groundwater, and the air immediately following larger commercial fireworks displays. These chemicals –used for colour, noise and propulsion –might be harmful to humans and aquatic life, and until we know for sure, the precautionary principle should apply.

Impact on humans

Humans have been *injured and killed¹²*, both in the manufacture and use of fireworks.

People can also experience anxiety, sound and sensory disturbance. War veterans and anyone with *PTSD¹³* may have symptoms triggered by fireworks. People on the autism spectrum can suffer *due to atypical sensory processing¹⁴*.

¹<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S01681591200367X>

²<https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/fireworks-july-fourth-tips>

³<https://www.rspcansw.org.au/what-we-do/care-for-animals/pet-hazards/fireworks-and-storms/>

⁴<https://hartpury.pure.elsevier.com/en/publications/owner-perceptions-of-the-effects-of-fireworks-on-rabbits-and-guinea-pigs>

⁵<https://theconversation.com/how-dogs-are-really-affected-by-fireworks-and-what-you-can-do-to-help-67402>

⁶<https://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/not-thousands-birds-fall-dead-arkansas-new-year-eve-article-1.999476>

⁷<https://www.perthnow.com.au/local-news/central/town-of-victoria-park-revises-fireworks-policy-amid-concerns-over-impact-on-birds-c-4055713>

⁸<https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Seasonal-fire-causes/Fireworks#:~:text=Fireworks%20fire%20%26%20injury%20facts,million%20in%20direct%20property%20damage.>

⁹<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-07-02/nt-firework-cracker-night-injuries-hospital-fires/9930232>

¹⁰<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-07-02/nt-firework-cracker-night-injuries-hospital-fires/9930232>

¹¹<https://www.des.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt341/files/documents/2020-01/bb-60.pdf>

¹²https://www.monash.edu/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/218440/haz47.pdf

¹³<https://theconversation.com/fireworks-can-torment-veterans-and-survivors-of-gun-violence-with-ptsd-heres-how-to-celebrate-with-respect-for-those-who-served-141731>

¹⁴https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/uploads/documents/Fact%20Sheets/Factsheet_Sensory-processing_20170306.pdf

Alternatives

Options such as silent fireworks, *drone displays*¹⁵ and laser light shows have already demonstrated their “wow” factor to crowds. There are suitable alternatives which can be reused multiple times with less environmental waste. “Silent” fireworks are quieter and produce less toxic waste. These alternatives still need to be well-regulated to avoid harm. When

used responsibly, they can cause considerably less harm and damage than fireworks shows today.

The AJP has concerns regarding the use of large flame projectors. When used inappropriately, this pyrotechnic equipment can be terrifying or even deadly especially for nocturnal birds, bats and insects who might be burnt or killed when flying into that space.

¹⁵<https://www.casa.gov.au/casa-approves-largest-drone-light-display-australia-vivid-sydney>



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