



YOUR TEAM IS GOING TO RESEARCH

Restrictions on fireworks and sky lanterns

and speak **for and against** restricting fireworks displays to reduce distress in animals

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This brief has been produced as part of the *RSPCA's Animal Welfare: The Great Debate* and is a starting point for the research you will need to do, into the subject, in order to ensure a successful debate. The points for or against a subject may not be RSPCA policy and represent some of the wider thinking around the public debate.

- Fireworks are very popular across England and Wales, and enjoyed throughout the year. However, they can have a big impact on public safety and animal welfare, and many animals are frightened by them.
- Attending fireworks events and celebrations is a major part of the UK's culture. Estimates from the British Pyrotechnists Association suggest around 20 million people attend either private or public displays over the November period.
- Many animal welfare organisations share advice on the practical steps owners and keepers can take to mitigate distress caused by fireworks. Being prepared can play such an important role in ensuring animal safety, but preparation isn't possible for all animals (e.g. wildlife, or horses which have to stay in their field).
- An estimated 200,000 sky lanterns are sold and released each year in the UK. Lanterns are lifted into the air by an open flame heat source. Once extinguished, having potentially travelled for many miles, the lantern will fall back to Earth. They're often used as symbols of celebration or remembrance, but can have detrimental impacts on the environment, pets, farm animals and wildlife.

FOR

Here are some points **in favour** of restricting firework displays to reduce distress in animals – what other points can you find?

- The RSPCA receives hundreds of calls from concerned animal lovers about welfare problems associated with fireworks; and loud bangs can cause major distress.
- There's strong support from the public for action. Two UK Government and Parliament petitions reached more than 100,000 signatures from people wanting to see a restriction in firework use.
- Sky lanterns are a dangerous fire hazard to wildlife and can damage their habitats and the environment, and cause grass fires. Animals can also become entangled in lanterns.

AGAINST

Here are some reasons why it is **not necessary** – can you find any more?

- There are already laws which aim to ensure safety related to firework displays, including a curfew and restricting the sale of fireworks whose noise levels exceed 120 decibels.
- Fireworks are enjoyed by millions of people every single year; many of whom would never dream of supporting anything that would harm an animal.
- It is possible to treat firework phobias in many animals – such as dogs – and raising awareness rather than more regulation would be a more proportionate step for everybody.

Information you may want to find out

- Has enough research been done to assess the impacts fireworks have on animals? And how serious are those impacts?
- What restrictions are already in place on the sale and release of fireworks in the UK?
- Which countries currently have more restrictions than England and Wales concerning fireworks?
- Should UK traditions like firework displays be restricted or curtailed in favour of animals and their welfare?

Potential sources of information

- RSPCA website: www.rspca.cymru
- Political Animal website: www.politicalanimal.wales
- RSPCA facts and figures: <http://media.rspca.org.uk/media/facts>
- <http://www.pyro2.org.uk/uk-legislation/>
- <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN05704/SN05704.pdf>

