

A-OK9

THE GUIDE TO Dogs & Fireworks

Turn a Big Bang into a Non-Event

Achieve Calm



They Are Loud

Fireworks make a loud sound. Your dog has a more acute sense of hearing than you, so those loud booms, crackles and whistles are alarming.

They Are Unpredictable Events

You may expect fireworks on holidays like the Fourth of July, Bonfire Night or New Year's Eve, but for your dog, it's just another day. Those firecrackers come without warning. The loud noises and flashing lights sound and look different each time. Plus, they come at various intervals, so your dog can't get used to them, nor should they have to!

They Pose a Threat

The noise and unpredictability of fireworks lead your dog to perceive them as a threat. This triggers their fight-or-flight response. Your dog may bark at the noises or try to run away and hide. Your dog may display other signs of anxiety such as restlessness, panting, pacing and whining.

Fireworks Make Dogs Feel Trapped

Fireworks are inescapable on holidays like Independence Day or Bonfire Night. If these noises trigger your dog's flight response, they will try to run from the threat. Unfortunately, there's often nowhere to go, as your dog can still hear the loud booms indoors, preventing them from running away in fear.



BE PREPARED

Create a Strategy

To help your dog cope with these events, you need to adopt several strategies:

KEEP YOUR DOG INSIDE – even if your dog spends most of their time outdoors, bring your dog inside before firework displays (well in advance) to prevent your dog from running away due to fear.

HELP REDUCE THEIR ANXIETY LEVELS:
Try a calming supplement to support their body's natural relaxation responses.

SUPERVISE AND MANAGE THEIR MOVEMENTS – direct supervision is essential in preventing injury or escape. If you are unable to supervise your dog on the night, consider making alternative arrangements. Ask a responsible person to dog-sit or consider boarding your dog with a good and reputable boarding kennel so they will be safe.



MICROCHIP AND ID YOUR DOG – for the 'what if's' and the 'just in case' scenarios. Your dog may escape. You may not be available to supervise when there are spontaneous fireworks. Ensure your dog is microchipped and that your contact details are up to date on the register. Make sure they're wearing an ID tag or that ID is provided directly on their collar with your up-to-date contact details.

CREATE A SAFE SPACE – if your dog is crate-trained, make their crate available, as that's probably already a safe space for them. If not, put your dog in a bathroom or other small room with music or white noise to help drown out the boom of fireworks. Provide them with bedding. Bedding can also help in sound proofing or reduce the volume of the fireworks display if used to cover their crate.

TRY A CALMING WRAP – calming wraps, vests and shirts apply light, constant pressure. Many dogs find this soothing and calming. You may find such products help in other anxiety-inducing situations, like thunderstorms.

GIVE YOUR DOG SOMETHING TO DO – play games or give your dog a K9-Calm Mat, a meaty bone or employ scatter-feeding during the firework event. The games will keep them focused, and the food-based activities will help them calm down. Do not punish your dog if they show signs of fear and distress.

PLAY TRAINING GAMES to prepare your dog for the situation before the situation occurs. This includes confidence building games and games that work on building a positive association with sounds.

Length of fireworks shows

Most professional firework displays can last from 6 to 22 minutes in length and are advertised in local newspapers or municipal websites, or Facebook groups. Other events can occur at any time, so you need to respond to your dog's needs at short notice.

Have a plan in place and practice with your dog before you need to use it. Think of it as an A to B fireworks plan.

Did you KNOW?

Research on ingredients in Calm-K9 shows L-tryptophan boosting serotonin/ lemonbalm promoting relaxation/ the gut-brain relationship helping with anxiety

Fireworks toxicity

The ingredients of fireworks are very toxic to your dog. Fireworks contain hazardous chemicals such as potassium nitrate, which is an oxidising agent. They also contain charcoal or sulphur and colouring agents, many of which are dangerous heavy metals. When ingested, pets can develop gastrointestinal issues like vomiting, a painful abdomen, and bloody diarrhea.

When out with your dog during or after fireworks, keep an eye out for unused or used firework casings. Build focus and proximity to ensure your dog doesn't accidentally ingest these objects. You may want to consider muzzle training too to prevent any sneaky nibbles. Seek veterinary advice if you suspect your dog has ingested fireworks.

The rest of this guide will focus on training for the situation and strategies that you can use to help your dog during fireworks.



NATURAL CALMING INGREDIENTS TO HELP WITH Your Dogs Bucket

You may have noticed that some dogs are very aware, vigilant and notice things, while other dogs kind of plod along and let the world pass them by. For many of you that own dogs, the ones we call Naughty but Nice dogs, you will know that certain events, sights, sounds or smells might set your dog off.

So what's going on? Your dog perceives the events from the world around them through their senses (sight, sound, touch, taste and smell). The brain then responds physiologically and emotionally. The physical response causes the production of stress hormones, such as cortisol and, in turn, adrenaline. These stress hormones build up and fill the dog's metaphorical stress bucket.

Did you **KNOW?**

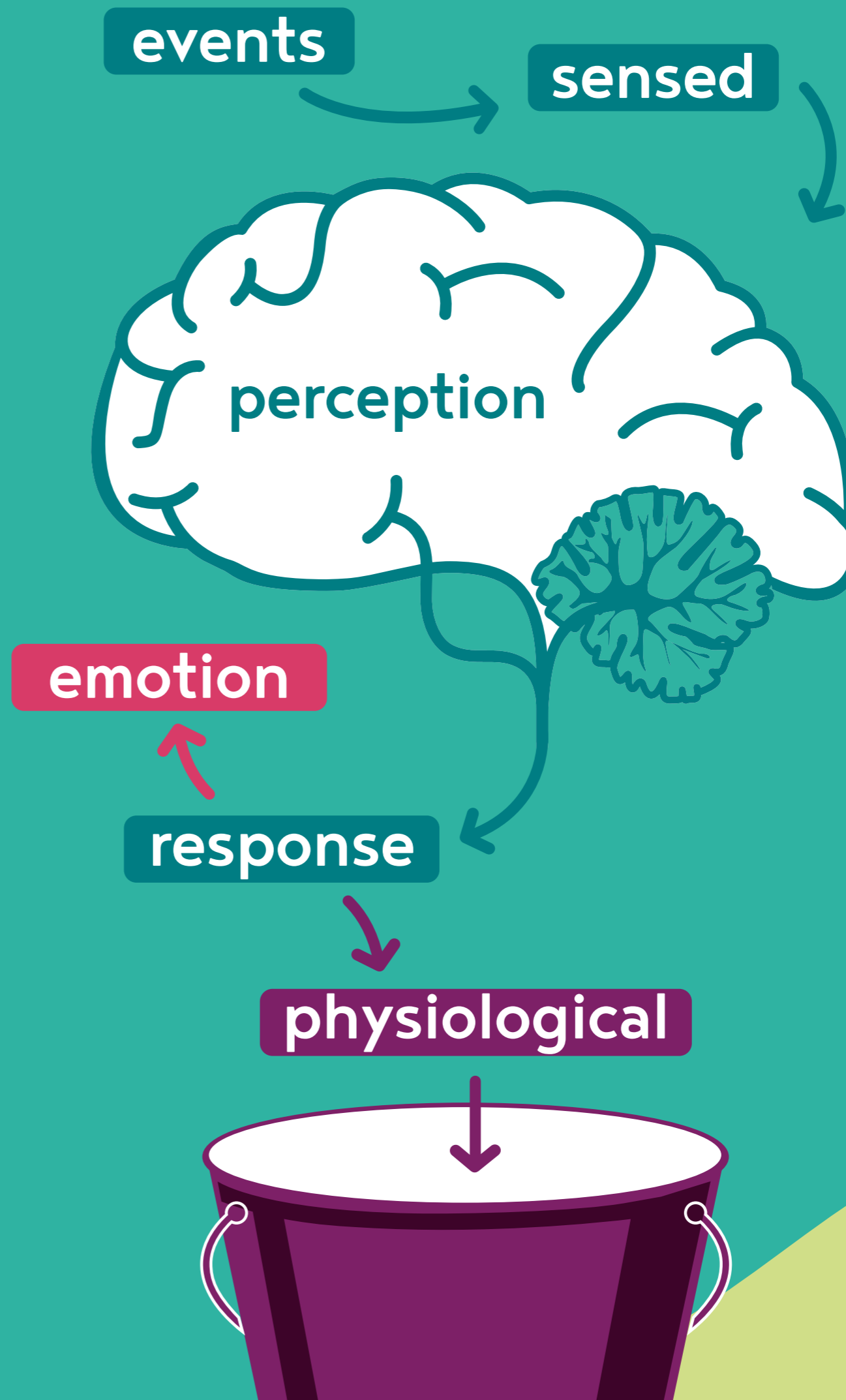
L-Tryptophan, an ingredient found in our Calm K9 supplement, is an amino acid that can be found in Turkey and Pumpkin seeds? L-Tryptophan is known for boosting Serotonin ('the happy chemical') in your dog's brain to increase their ability to feel optimism and calmness! Help your dog feel confident and happy in challenging situations.

PERCEPTION

All dogs are different and respond to events in the world individually. As a dog owner, you do not have control over the events of the world. If we try and control the events of the world, we quickly become frustrated. For example, the neighbour who always lets off fireworks is not a controllable event. What can be controlled is how your dog responds to events. How events are perceived is controllable. That is exciting. This is the realm of perception, and perception is a result of how that brain is shaped. You can reshape the brain through games.

RESPONSE

Perception is based upon how the brain is shaped. You also know that dogs will respond positively or negatively – optimism and pessimism. The brain creates an output or response that is both emotional and physiological. The physiological response produces stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline.



GET TO KNOW THEIR Stress Bucket

The physiological response feeds into your dog's bucket. Every dog has a bucket that stores all the events that your dog perceives during the day. The bucket fills and fills and fills, and at some point, it reaches a threshold whereby it overflows. When a dog's bucket overflows, you will observe barking, lunging, jumping, zoomies, etc.

How much pays into your dog's bucket depends on your dog's senses, how it perceives events and its ultimate response. Some dogs have big buckets, and some dogs have small buckets. It doesn't relate to the dog's size - a Chihuahua may have a huge bucket and a Bernese Mountain Dog a tiny bucket.

The more we can empty the bucket and stop events from paying into it, the more stress-free a dog's life will be. This, in turn, will lead to a more stress-free life for a dog owner. So, what strategies can you use to manipulate your dog's bucket?



THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF YOUR DOG'S BUCKET

1



Size of the bucket

2

Hole in the bucket
Where the bucket empties,
varies in size also



2

3



Natural State
of the Bucket

The baseline some dogs have a full bucket as a baseline, where others have an emptier bucket

4

What pays into
the bucket?
What fills the bucket - both positive/
exciting and negative/
frustrating and/or frightening.

Being aware that you can influence
these factors can change the way you
approach your training



4

Firstly, you may be putting your dog into situations where they're not comfortable. For example, taking your dog to visit grandkids and they find the grandkids very's exciting and difficult to behave around.

The second strategy is to change a dog's perception through brain reshaping games. Switch your dog from a pessimist to an optimist. A calm and positive emotional response doesn't pay into your dog's bucket. Being an optimist is like having a shield to the events of the world.

As you change their lifestyle and reshape their brain, your dog's bucket starts to empty, and your dog becomes aware of fewer events!

Did you **KNOW?**

You can help your dog empty their bucket by adding a simple, easy-to-use supplement to their daily rations that helps to promote calmness without medicating your dog. Calm K9 contains Passiflora aka Passion Flower, an herb that promotes calmness and reduces anxiety.

Perfect for
when fire works are on
the horizon!





CALMNESS

A dog that has learned to relax in any and every environment is less likely to be reactive, barking and lunging at things that startle, scare, or frustrate them as they grow older. It's a powerful skill and concept to perceive a change in the world and think clearly enough not to overreact, feel threatened, and control fast impulses.

You can never have too much calm in a dog. If your dog is calm, they are behaving appropriately. If your dog is calm, it cannot be experiencing frustration. If your dog is calm, fear can't overwhelm them.

Dietary supplements

To help empty your dog's bucket, you need to lower the stress chemicals in your dog's system. A-OK9 Calm-K9 contains high-quality natural ingredients – made with mood-boosting Tryptophan, Passiflora and Lemon Balm and a gut-supporting probiotic and L-glutamic. Simply add to your dog's food once a day to help break down cortisol and help your dog remain calmer.

Combine the A-OK9 Calm-K9 with food and spread onto a Calm Mat to achieve new levels of great behaviour through the naturally calming power of licking and enrichment!

OPTIMISM

Activities and games that will help your noise-reactive dog overcome pessimism towards fireworks are called noise box and novelty scatter-feeding. These games make novel, unpredictable events fun and enjoyable. Help your dog worry about nothing!

The Noise Box Game

A game for dogs that are sensitive to noises.



“My dog was a rescue, very anxious. Had her 5 years and not a lot of change in behaviour. After a few weeks with Calm K9, she is much more relaxed and even no reaction to fireworks nearby recently.”

We like to use a cardboard box, an empty child’s paddling pool, a laundry basket or any small space that would contain the noises. You could even use your bathtub!

Fill your noise box with:

- Carrier bags
- Noisy paper
- Plastic bottles
- Empty cans
- Bubble wrap
- Children’s noisy toys



You could also use rattling objects, but remember only to use safe things for your dog.

You can decide the level of difficulty from looking at the dog in front of you. The dog in front of you is who you are training with and will dictate your training session and the difficulty level!

Allow your dog to explore the objects while scattering a small amount of food into the box. They get the food by exploring the noise box.

This game will boost your dog’s confidence greatly. If your dog is worried by the box at any moment, go back a step and try to develop confidence more gradually, maybe help them out a bit – this is an exercise to grow your dog’s confidence, not to worry them! Listen to your dog and vary the noise box’s contents as often as you can and utilise those recyclables!

Write down your progress along the way and, where possible, video your sessions. Review your progress in 3 weeks – we bet you will notice a real change!

This game is a super confidence-builder with novelty and noise. The key is a gradual progression – you can’t tackle everything at once; break the exercises into manageable bite-size chunks, and you will be onto a big winner.

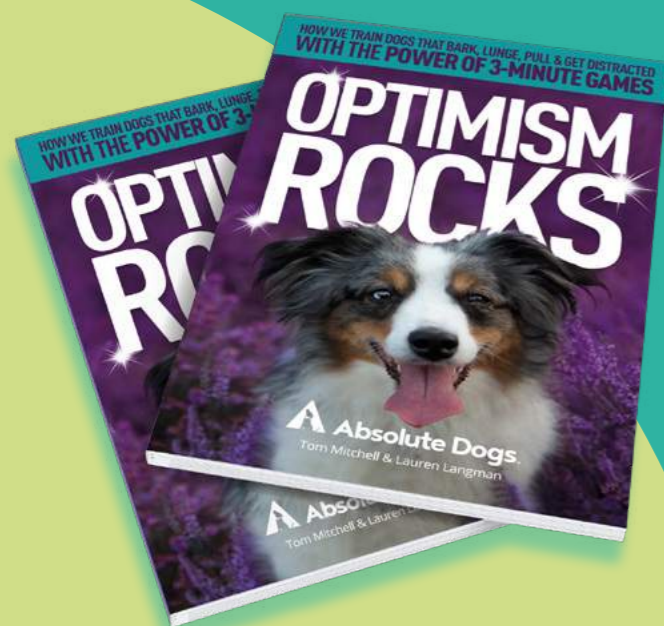
The more you think outside the box about what to put into the box, and the more you allow your mind to make that leap, the easier it will become.

Novelty Scatter-feeding Game

So this game is pretty simple, and we simply love it! Every day your dog has a certain amount of food, and we like to try to grow CALMNESS and confidence through timing our scatter feeding closely with outside distractions.

For example, when we know that a dog is in the next-door garden, but we want to let our dog explore the yard, we can reinforce CALMNESS with a dog next door. Similarly, we can pair scatter-feeding while listening to a recording of fireworks inside the house.

Scatter a good portion of your dog's dinner onto the ground and then allow your dog out to hunt it out. Supervise this activity and bring your dog back into the house or another room when they have finished, so they do not practice bad choices like barking at the neighbour's dog or the fireworks recording.



Download the Optimism Rocks eBook for an in-depth look at how to teach your dog other optimism activities. These will complement the training you have done for your noise-sensitive dog and can be used to support your dog during fireworks.



Become “Sexier Than a Fireworks Show!”

Apply the lessons learnt in the “Sexier Than A Squirrel Challenge” to becoming sexier than a fireworks show. The novelty of noise and lights, while high bucket fillers for some dogs, are events that you can train your dog to ignore. Building proximity and calmness through games will help support your dog.



HAVE A PLAN IN PLACE & PRACTICE IT

Support During Fireworks

In the event of fireworks, you need to have a plan in place. You might want to move your dog inside and put them in their crate. Have any toys and treats ready for such an event, and be prepared to support them for at least 30 minutes.

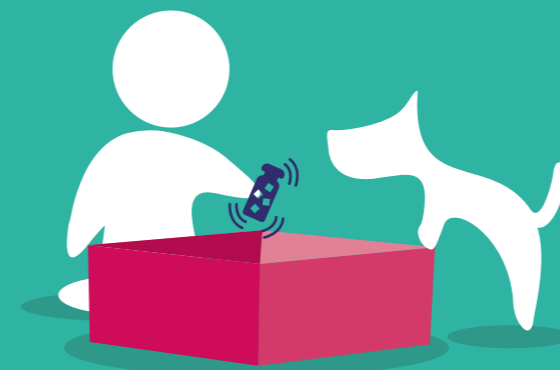
To ensure that you and your dog are ready, calmly practice your plan so when you need to use it, your dog will think it is just another game. Play the fireworks recording during your practice too, gradually increasing the volume to set your dog up for success.



“Jasper, now 2 yrs, has been sound reactive since quite young, he is also quite anxious, lacks confidence and his bucket can fill quickly. We have been using Calm K9 for a week now and I can definitely see a difference. There just seems to be a calmer air about him, to the point I have wondered if he’s ok! He’s not at all sedated, just calmer in his being. We DMT’d successfully through unexpected fireworks, a miracle, and he has been very alert and focused when we train as long as his arousal levels are right. It’s early days but I think we’re on to a winner here.”

DMT (Distraction, Mark, Treat)

During the event, continue using DMT. Have treats on hand and make the whole event a neutral experience. Don’t excite your dog with too much positive praise. Be calm, and don’t let their bucket overflow. Not sure what DMT is? Check out the Optimism Rocks eBook linked above.



Passive calmness activities

Present your dog with a filled Kong, a lick mat with something that will take them some time to clear, like peanut butter, a meaty bone, or even scatter-feeding.

Combined with A-OK9 Calm-K9, you will help your dog through this potentially stressful experience.

Slow feeding games might be fun to try, as are food puzzle toys. The aim is to occupy your dog with a more pleasant activity than listening to loud noises.

Mask the sound and lights of the fireworks

Play music, turn on the radio or even run the shower to create white noise. Close the curtains and turn on the lights in the house, so flashes are less noticeable. If your dog prefers their crate during this time, place a blanket or heavy towel over the enclosure to create a cozy cave.

General safety

Supervise your dog during the event to keep them safe from harm. Provide a safe place to hide, such as a quiet bedroom, a crate inside the house, or a dog bed. If you are going out during a known fireworks event, consider a dog sitter or friend to help your dog during this time.

Other support

Some pheromone products may help alleviate stress. These are available in a spray or diffuser formulation.

Compression coats are an effective strategy for some dogs, and one company has even developed ear protection muffs for dogs.

In some circumstances, training alone may not be enough to keep your dog safe during a firework event. For example, your dog has displayed such fearful behaviour in the past that it has led to severe injury. In these instances, we recommend that you schedule an appointment with your veterinarian to evaluate the possibility of prescribing some anti-anxiety medications to administer before fireworks.

Give your dog the support they need with a specially formulated supplement designed to help them navigate life with just a few less hiccups. Alongside establishing a training plan to prepare for the situation, you can combat spontaneous events and events that occur before your dog has achieved their training goals, with an easy, tasty Calm K9 scoop (or more for larger dogs) mixed into their daily rations. Conquer fireworks with the right plan in place.
You've got this!





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