KEEP YOUR PETS SAFE ON JULY 4TH

Independence Day may be relaxing and fun for us, but it can be frightening and even dangerous for pets. July 5th is the busiest day of the year at animal shelters as they are housing companion animals that fled in fright the night before. They are often found miles from their homes, disoriented and exhausted. Anxious families can find themselves searching the streets and shelters looking for a treasured family member whose fear drove him to jump a high fence or break from her leash.

If your pet is upset by thunder, a door slamming, or other loud noises, Fourth of July fireworks will be utterly terrifying, so take these precautions:

■ Your pets won't enjoy the fireworks display, so leave them at home. Keep them inside, and if possible, shielded from loud noises. Keep windows closed and draw the shades to minimize the sound and flashes of light.

■ If loud noises upset your pets, do not leave them alone; ensure someone can stay with them. If you're the one staying with them, act calm and give them reassuring pets and hugs; animals look to you to see how you're reacting.

■ If you think your pets should be given medication to help ease their stress, consult your veterinarian well in advance.

■ Contact an animal behaviorist to work with your pets on their fears. With some positive reinforcement and behavior modification training, by next Independence Day, you all may be worry-free.

■ Be sure that all ID tags are properly affixed to your pet's collar and that they have your current contact information, including cell number(s).

■ Update your microchip registrations and pet license information to ensure they are current.

"It's with these tips and tricks we can keep our furry companions relaxed throughout the holiday," says American Humane President and CEO **Robin Ganzert, Ph.D**. "We can make sure that the Fourth of July is a joyful occasion for everyone, including our beloved animals."

For more information on American Humane visit americanhumane.org.