

CASE CARD

Residential Fireworks – Territory Day

THE ISSUE

Every year on “Territory Day”, the first day in July, Territorians are allowed to set off fireworks between 6-11 pm without a permit, which causes:

- a massive upheaval and damage to wildlife and domestic animals,
- increased house, grass/scrub and bushfires, and
- pollution of the air, sea, soil and public areas.

Further, some Territorians continue to set off fireworks outside these times in the days, weeks and months afterwards, upsetting animals, some having just settled after the Territory Day chaos.

As we gain a better understanding and acknowledge the negative effects fireworks can have on the environment and wildlife, we have the responsibility to evolve our celebratory rituals and do better.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The difference between commercial and residential fireworks

Commercial fireworks are concentrated in one location, rather than in several locations at once, as happens on Territory Day. This allows birds to take off and land again in a 'safer' location rather than continuing to flee noises coming at them from all directions¹.

Last year, NT Police, Fire & Emergency Services said, "Cracker Night is always challenging"² and “it was disappointing to see that some of our firefighters had to deal with people acting irresponsibly with fireworks”². Over just the three days following Territory Day they revealing they were “swamped with emergency calls”³, receiving a total of 870 Triple 0 calls and 147 calls to 131 444 relating to fire or fireworks, that reported 231 grassfires, 14 rubbish bin fires, 13 structure fires and six vehicle fires².



Learn how to keep your dog calm through fireworks

WHY THIS ISSUE IS A CONCERN

Damage to wildlife:

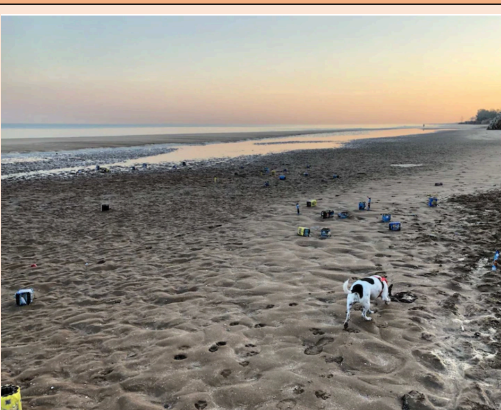
During extensive firework activity, birds, bats and other small mammals can be killed by sonic shock, literally being knocked out of the sky, or abandoning their nests in fear, becoming so stressed and disorientated with reduced visibility they can smash into houses, cars, fences, billboards, trees and buildings. Some of these birds may never return to their nests, their babies starving or falling victim to weather conditions or predators. Eggs or young can unintentionally be pushed out of the nest or crushed in panic, and some fledglings may try to fly without knowing how. One study found some birds flew so far out to sea there was no possibility they would be able to make the return trip⁴. Some birds that aren't killed outright can die from breathing in the smoke that fireworks contain.

Kangaroos, domestic dogs and other animals flee onto roads to escape the perceived danger, causing injuries or death to them, as well as being hazardous to drivers. This panic can result in mothers and babies being unable to find each other after the noise.

One study concluded “The physical distance between 2 firework displays on the same day must be at least 10 kilometres.” and that “Extremely loud explosion effects (flash crackers, etc.) and percussive charges along water, along the coast, near protected areas, breeding colonies and roosting sites must be eliminated.”⁵



An advice-level fire burns at Deskin Place in Durack while crackers are let off in nearby streets. (ABC News: Myles Houlbrook-Walk)



Top End beaches have been left covered in firework rubbish after Territory Day. (Supplied)



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WHY THIS ISSUE IS A CONCERN

Fires

Fireworks set off by the public in unregulated settings can cause house, grass/scrub and bush fires, which can be catastrophic due to extremely high loads of dry weeds, such as buffel and gamba grasses.

Pollution

Fireworks canisters are not completely destroyed by the explosion, and the debris and toxins pollute the soil and environment. Firework packaging is regularly left in parks, creek/river beds, on footpaths, beaches and other public areas. If swallowed by an animal, this debris can't be broken down by their digestive system, which can kill them. In some cases, offspring are inadvertently fed the foreign material.³

Smoke from fireworks contains a mixture of sulphur-coal compounds, traces of heavy metals, and other toxic chemicals or gases, such as ozone, sulphur dioxide and nitric oxide. These toxins become airborne after fireworks combustion, creating dangerous levels of air and water pollution, that animals and humans inhale and drink.

ACTION REQUEST

The NT Government needs to ban the sale of fireworks to the public and only have official fireworks displays to celebrate Territory Day, thereby reducing and containing the disturbances created, containing damages and pollution into a more manageable area.

Or, better still, organise environmentally friendly alternatives to fireworks, such as drone or laser light shows. There's a myriad of ways to celebrate creatively without causing environmental damage and pollution and suffering and death to animals.

REFERENCES

1. This 4th Of July, Think Of Your Feathered Friends As You Plan For Fireworks - <https://www.npr.org/2019/06/29/737001802/this-4th-of-july-think-of-your-feathered-friends-as-you-plan-for-fireworks>
2. Territory Day 2022 Wrap Up <https://pfes.nt.gov.au/newsroom/2022/territory-day-2022-wrap>
3. Territory Day 2021: NT lights up with fireworks and bushfires as 'cracker night' returns - <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-08-30/territory-day-cracker-night-2021-bushfires-in-pictures/100416808>
4. How do July 4 celebrations affect wildlife? - <https://news.illinois.edu/view/6367/437774847>
5. Effects of Fireworks on Birds -A critical Overview - https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337033058_Effects_of_Fireworks_on_Birds_-_A_critical_Overview

Images

1. <https://dogdelite.com/featured/how-to-keep-your-dog-calm-during-fireworks-this-fourth-of-july/>
2. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-08-29/territory-day-fireworks-cracker-night-2021-nt-emergency-services/100416648>
3. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-07-02/territory-day-fireworks-cracker-night-injuries-triple-zero-nt/11269394>

FURTHER READING

- Birds flee en masse from New Years Eve Fireworks <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3199162/>
- Fireworks: Impacts on Pets and Wildlife <https://www.animaladvocatesscpa.com/blog/post/fireworks-impacts-on-pets-and-wildlife/>
- How Do Fireworks Harm Wild Birds? <https://www.forbes.com/sites/grrlscientist/2017/12/30/how-do-fireworks-harm-wild-birds/?sh=594eb468118c>
- How Fireworks can affect your health and ecosystem <https://www.theweathernetwork.com/ca/news/article/how-fireworks-can-affect-your-health-and-the-ecosystem>
- The Impacts of Fireworks <https://www.al.org.au/the-impacts-of-fireworks>



LETTER WRITING TIPS

Residential Fireworks – Territory Day

WRITE TO

NT Chief Minister

GPO Box 3146,
Darwin, NT 0801

Chief.minister@nt.gov.au

Your local member

Find their name and
address here:

<https://parliament.nt.gov.au/members/>

Your name

Address

Date

Dear.....

Introduce yourself

e.g. I am a resident of...

Identify the issue you are concerned about

e.g. I am concerned about the impact of residential fireworks on Territory Day.

Include some facts (you can use the information from the case card)

e.g. The fireworks cause

- *a massive upheaval and damage to wildlife and domestic animals,*
- *house, grass/scrub and bushfires, and*
- *pollution of the air, waters, soil and public areas.*

Explain in your own words why this issue is a concern

e.g. I really care about the safety and wellbeing of animals. I don't want our community to act in ways that might hurt them.

Tell the Minister / Mayor what you want them to do

E.g.

- *The NT Government needs to ban the sale of fireworks to the public and only have official fireworks displays to celebrate Territory Day, thereby reducing and containing the disturbances created, containing damages and pollution into a more manageable area.*
- *Or, better still, organise environmentally friendly alternatives to fireworks, such as drone or laser light shows. There's a myriad of ways to celebrate without causing environmental damage and pollution and suffering and death to animals.*

Thank you for taking the time to consider my concerns. I look forward to your response.

Yours Sincerely,

Your Name